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THE GUIDE TO COMICS • 72

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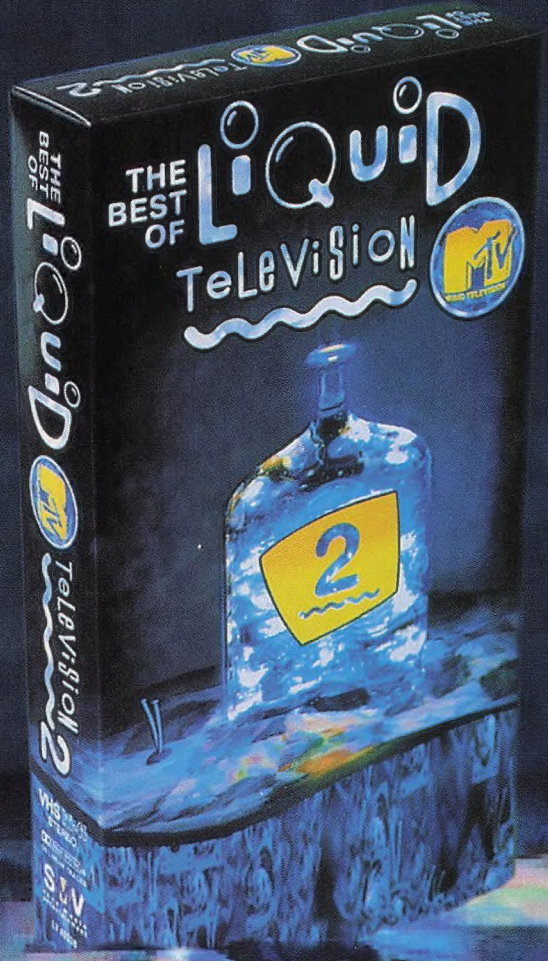

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The new **X-Men** cover was illustrated by Joe Madureira and Tim Townsend, and colored by Liquid Graphics. To check out the darkening of the X-Men, jump to **page 62**.

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EXCLUSIVE

Holy half-nudity! Here's your only chance to get the exclusive *Darkchylde* #1/2 comic, featuring an all-new sin-tillating tale of that witchy superbabe Ariel in a story by Randy Queen and Kaucha. Jump to page 80 for details.

WHEE. I'M SIX. WHEE.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO US

This month marks our 6th year of publishing *Wizard*. Since *Wizard* started, this industry has seen a lot of things happen—the ups and downs, the controversies, the Bad Girls and self-publishing booms, to name a few.

We have a lot of great things in store for you this year. We've got lots more news and hot tips, along with lots more fun fan-oriented features you're sure to enjoy. We're going to keep pushing the envelope on new talents and titles. You won't want to miss this!

We are also starting a new monthly toy/action figure magazine—*ToyFare*. You wanted more coverage of this growing market, so we delivered. And if you're into RPGs (role-playing games) *InQuest* will now take you there.

This month, we've got lots of cool things including a really neat feature on the Batman animated series' new look. There's lots of cool things going on with the cartoon, including new characters like Nightwing! We have the inside scoop along with plenty of pictures. For you mutant fans, we have a feature on the way the X-Men have changed over the years, as well as a great cover by Joe Madureira! Our other cover features Spider-Man vs. Venom by Mike Wieringo. You'll want to check out the related feature on villains, which looks at the latest trend of bad guys turning good. And you definitely don't want to miss this month's Q&A with Mark Waid and Ron Garney who give their opinions of "Heroes Reborn" and what they hope to do with *Captain America*. There's lots more great features. Be sure to read them all.

As for goodies, we've got a hot Nightwing chromium card, a Blink poster and the not-to-be-missed *Darkchylde* #1/2 offer—this book will be on fire.

Until next month, stay cool!

Gareb S. Shamus

P.S. *ToyFare* #1 is out next month—don't miss it!

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Stuff you don't ever read...

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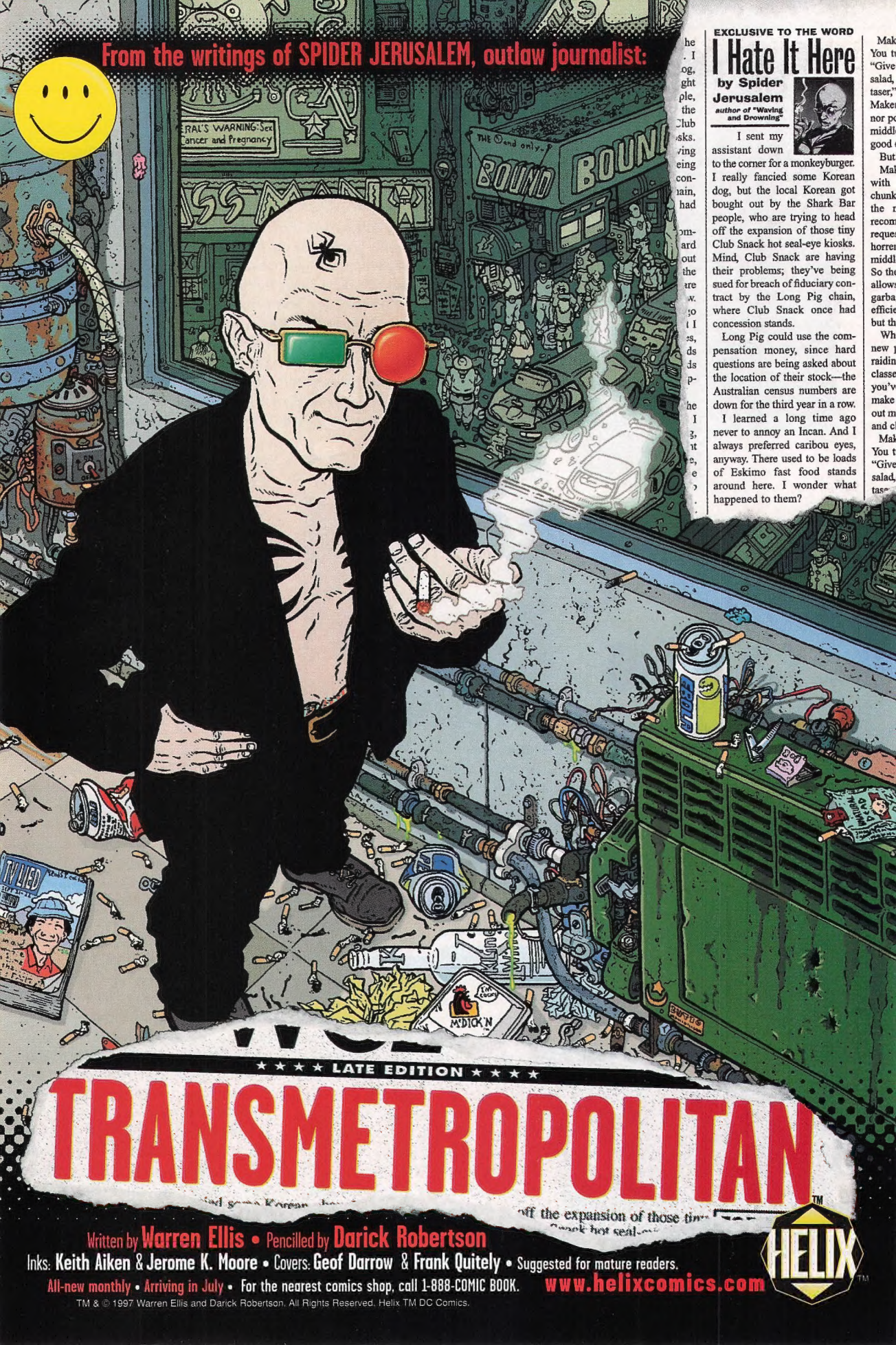
From the writings of SPIDER JERUSALEM, outlaw journalist:
EXCLUSIVE TO THE WORD
I Hate It Here
by Spider Jerusalem
author of "Waving and Drowning"
I sent my assistant down to the corner for a monkeyburger. I really fancied some Korean dog, but the local Korean got bought out by the Shark Bar people, who are trying to head off the expansion of those tiny Club Snack hot seal-eye kiosks. Mind, Club Snack are having their problems; they've being sued for breach of fiduciary contract by the Long Pig chain, where Club Snack once had concession stands.
Long Pig could use the compensation money, since hard questions are being asked about the location of their stock—the Australian census numbers are down for the third year in a row.
I learned a long time ago never to annoy an Incan. And I always preferred caribou eyes, anyway. There used to be loads of Eskimo fast food stands around here. I wonder what happened to them?
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MAGIC WORDS

'Star Wars' Equals 'Overrated'

Looks like we have the real mixed bag o' goodies this month. Topics ranged far and wide, centering upon on a few select themes.

***Thunderbolts* is one of those themes. The comic freaks of America have spoken and we have heard their voice: *Thunderbolts* is a winner. Now we'll have to see if the book's popularity can last after the heroes return.**

Erik Larsen's Savage Dragon and the "Shock Treatment" feature we ran in *Wizard* #68 was another big theme, as it seems everyone had an opinion about Erik's...uh...unique approach to comic storytelling. The vast majority of letters came in supporting Erik. More on the Dragon later in this column.

Then there were the letters about the response to the "Star Wars" letter I ran in #69's "Magic Words." While the volume of mail was (a bit surprisingly) nowhere near as large as it was for John Pading (see *Wizard* #64) or even Tattoo Boy (*Wizard* #61), it was still significant enough to register. So in the interest of equal time and just to show that I don't go running for shelter when the flak comes my way, we'll lead off with a typical ticked-off "Star Wars" letter. Then the fun really begins. Hold on tight...

Photo courtesy of Lucasfilm Ltd.

Hello, Jim,

I just finished reading your letters page. It's generally very enjoyable. But there was an answer to a letter in #69 that just plain ticked me off.

For the most part, I enjoy the humor of the letters page. I often find myself agreeing with your ideas in comics. So what's this leading up to? It's about a letter sent in by Eric Thompson asking "What are 'Star Wars' fans called?"

You took the liberty of not answering Eric's question at all, and instead totally trashed "Star Wars" in what you must have considered a humorous fashion. It was not funny. I think you owe Eric Thompson an apology, if you are human enough to do so.

As an aside, I will now do what you seem incapable of doing: answering a simple question. Eric, most of my "Star Wars" pals call themselves "Warsies." I am also a Warsie and proud of it. I think "Star Wars" had a great storyline and was a pioneer in the development of movies. That's why it is still a success today. I think you owe all Warsies an apology, Jim.

Ashley Quick
Pensacola, FL

Thanks for a very reasoned response, but..."Warsies?"

Let's get a few things straight: I think the "Star Wars" movies are enjoyable. I saw 'em and they were fun to watch. But I also think they're highly overrated. I agree that they made tremendous strides in the development of movies, particularly in the special effects department. But I also think the story behind those effects is no great shakes whatsoever. I don't think we're dealing with any kind of high art here like many seem to believe. Heck, in a recent interview on CNN, Mark Hamill referred to "Star Wars" as "children's theater on a grand scale." I think we're dealing with simple fun entertainment and nothing more.

Which brings me to "overrated." I really don't understand is why some people choose to define their lives by these movies. I mean, I'm a big baseball fan, but I don't call myself a "basebally." I'm also a fan of the band The Kinks, but I don't call myself "Kinky." I leave that one to other people.

Maybe there's some great secret I'm missing out on in "Star Wars." I'm not above thinking that maybe I don't get the punchline sometimes. You wanna label yourself and tell the world who you are by defining yourself within the context of a movie? Okay. That's your choice. I just don't think I'll join you in that.

"Warsies?"

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Dear Big Jim,

"Hey, has anybody seen the Vertigo writers?" "Yeah, go down the hall and to your left. They're in the mainstream superhero section."

Yes, it seems as though the liberals of the comic world are making a decidedly conservative choice in their work these days.

Alan Moore? He wrote *WildC.A.T.s* and is the current scribe on *Supreme*. Grant Morrison? He revamped the JLA. Peter Milligan? Writer on *Elektra* and a *Magneto* limited series for Marvel.

Steven T. Seagle is writing the *Alpha Flight* monthly. Even Neil Gaiman wrote a story for *Batman Black and White*. Why the sudden change? Has the market become so unsteady that everyone has to run for cover in the mainstream?

Andy Bruce
Valdosta, GA

I think it's more that these writers are just doing what they want to do. Alan Moore summed it up pretty well: "It's 1997. Should I be writing the same stuff in the same way I did when I was writing Swamp Thing in 1983? Maybe not. I just don't feel like that anymore and I don't write like that anymore."

Steve Seagle, who is still up to his left clavicle in Vertigo, added: "While you've got Alan Moore on Supreme, you've still got Alan Moore on From Hell. For every issue of Morrison's JLA, there's also an issue of Invisibles. I may be doing one Alpha Flight a month, but I'm still doing House of Secrets and Sandman Mystery Theatre every 30 days as well. We're not turning our backs. We're just satisfying our varied tastes."

Dear Wizard,

1) What are your thoughts on Superman's new powers and costume? Do you think it will last?

2) What is happening with *Milk and Cheese*? Any new issues coming out?

William Kosman
Surrey, B.C., Canada

1) Sure, it'll last all through 1997. Y'see, 1998 marks the 60th anniversary of Superman, and everything points to the return of traditional Big Blue as a big birthday event. Count on it.

2) Look for Milk and Cheese's Latest Thing from Slave Labor Graphics in July. It's the seventh M&C volume spawned from the dementia of Evan Dorkin to hit the stands.

Jim takes one of his favorite letters of the month and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this, nor is there a prize.

Dear Jimmy-Boy,

I have discovered the truth about one of *Wizard's* most guarded secrets. I know who's in the bunny suit in the Bunny Award pictures: It is Thor, God of Thunder!

Look very closely at the hammer the bunny is swinging. It sure looks like Mjolnir to me! And since Thor is the only one who can heft the mighty hammer, it must be him!

I understand why you want to keep this secret. After all, it is pretty embarrassing for the son of Odin to be posing for pictures in a fan magazine. He must be hurting for cash since Marvel went bankrupt. Give Thor my regards, and keep him away from that Shamus guy. It just wouldn't do for an Avenger to start smelling like cheese.

Angie Hanson
angiehanson@juno.com

Nice theory, but you're a bit off-base. Thor's hammer, the sacred Mjolnir, can only be hefted by those who are worthy enough to lift it. That list of characters includes Captain America, Beta Ray Bill, Wonder Woman (in Marvel vs. DC), Thor's father Odin, Thor's half-brother Loki (Really!), and maybe even a couple of others. F'r instance, Journey into Mystery Editrix (that's a female editor, kiddies) Bobbie Chase was seen holding something that looked like Mjolnir in the "Open House" tour-o'-Marvel feature in Wizard #71 (see left, with Fagan). And how 'bout Thorion from the Amalgam Universe? He's got a hammer, but is it Mjolnir? Maybe. Maybe not.

So the Bunny could conceivably be any one of these. Or maybe someone else. The mystery lives on...

Paul Schiraldi

Dear Wizard,

Does God really look like Erik Larsen draws him in the *Savage Dragon* comics? If so, how does Larsen know?

Dharma Parayana
Jakarta, Indonesia
dasar@dnet.net.id

Damn, but that's a good question. And think of the ramifications! What if Erik Larsen is the most enlightened man on earth? What if he is closer to the true nature of God than any of us? What might we learn from such a man? I had to ask him!

He said, "It was stated in the comic that everyone sees God differently. The way I portrayed God was the way he was seen through the eyes of the Savage Dragon. To someone else, God may look completely different."

Geez, what a letdown.

Dear Mr. Jim McLauchlin,

Here's a pack of questions for you:

1) From what I've heard of the Savage Dragon, he gets ripped apart a lot. Does he have a healing factor or something?

2) Forgive me for sounding like a comics virgin, but what exactly is a "splash page"?

3) Does that Darkchylde chick ever wear a shirt?

4) Is it just me or does the JLA seem like the wrong place for Hitman?

Kerry Ledbetter
Clinton, IA

Here's a pack of answers for you:

1) Well, I'll ask Erik Larsen again and hope for a better answer. Erik said: "Yes. But his is even better than Wolverine's. He can regenerate whole body parts. In fact, he once had both arms blown off and another time he had a hole blown in his stomach the size of a bowling ball.

Both times he recovered."

A hole in him the size of a bowling ball? I guess that's better.

2) A "comics virgin"? Now there's a term you never hear. Anyhoo, a "splash page" is any page that consists of just one giant panel. The first page of a comic is often a splash, and Superman *(vol. 2) #75 was an entire book of splash pages.*

3) On rare occasions.

4) It is the wrong place for him. That's why he was rejected as a potential member in JLA *#5.*

Dear Magic Words,

I got a few Ka-Zar-related questions for ya.

1) Where did Ka-Zar get those nifty boots of his? And don't say he made them, 'cause I've seen more than one picture of Ka-Zar that show that his boots have rubber soles.

2) Wouldn't Ka-Zar, and everyone else in the Savage Land for that matter, have really bad BO?

3) Isn't "Ka-Zar" a really stupid name, even for a jungle guy?

Jon Carter
Carterfoil@aol.com

I got a few Ka-Zar-related answers for ya.

1) Mail-order. Ka-Zar and his wife Shanna get regular mail drops parachuted in from planes flying over the Savage Land. He has shown an affinity in the past for items from outdoor outfitter L.L. Bean, so I'm willing to bet that his boots came from their catalog.

2) Nope. They can get deodorant and other toiletries dropped in, too.

3) Not really. Y'see, when young Kevin Plunder arrived in the Savage Land, he was attacked by the Man-Apes. Zabu, his trusty tiger companion, saved his ass. So the Man-Apes started calling him "Ka-Zar," which in their language means "son of the tiger."

By the way, you any relation to John Carter, Warlord of Mars?

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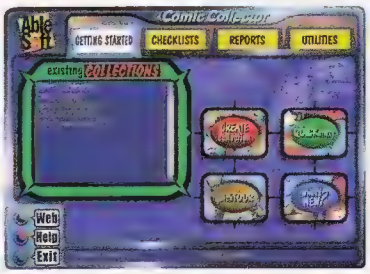

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Dear Wizard,
Is Jim Lee ever going to finish drawing the Punisher graphic novel *Rules of the Game*, which was supposed to come out six or seven years ago?

Eric Fisher
Azusa, CA

Nah. Once upon a time there was a thought of handing the existing pages back to Jim Lee to be turned into some sort of Marvel/WildStorm crossover, but that idea has fallen by the wayside. Looks like just another one of those unfinished comic projects.

Dear Wizzy Baby,
How did Marc Silvestri come up with "Top Cow" as the name of his comic company?

Mitch Sneed
New Roads, LA

Sez Silvestri: "I tried to name the company 'Todd McFarlane Productions.' I figured we'd sell a lot of comics that way. But that name was already taken. So we just came up with Top Cow, for what is really no special reason. It just sounded good. That's all." If you're looking for still more udderly exciting Top Cow info, check out Wizard's snappy Top Cow Special in July.

Bob Martin

Hi, Jim,
1) Are there English muffins in England? If there are, do they call them "English muffins"? Or just "muffins"?

2) Similarly, do they call it "Swiss cheese" in Switzerland, or do they just call it "cheese"?

If you could answer these questions, that would be mighty spiffy of you.

Rory Spire
Rory.Spire@aexp.com

Y'know, I always aspire to be spiffy.

1) Since I was already talking to Alan Moore this month and he lives in England, I asked him. He said, "We do have muffins over here. But I've never had an 'American' English muffin, so I'm not sure. My muffin research is not up to par, I'm afraid."

So I called Dan Abnett, co-writer of DC Comics' Resurrection Man and the grossly underrated two-issue Marvel Wonder Years mini-series starring Wonder Man. He has the scoop. "We have them here, and we simply call them 'muffins.' Your more typical America-style muffins with fruit and such we usually qualify by saying 'blueberry muffin' or the like."

2) Well-placed sources at Marvel Italy (and Italy borders Switzerland, y'know) tell us that the Swiss believe that to say "Swiss cheese" would be redundant. So they just call it "cheese."

Dear Wizard Sirs,
I am not writing to compliment your magazine, which I enjoy, but instead I'm here to ask you to formally apologize to your readers for misleading them. On numerous occasions, you, the *Wizard* staff, have made it seem like you guys have a life. Many times in the "Bullpen" section, you show off all these "wild" parties you have. But I know better.

All you guys are just grown-up comic geeks. You do not have wild parties. I doubt you even have friends outside the magazine. I will not tolerate these lies from you anymore. If you do not comply with an apology right away, I will be forced to come down there and smack you all in the head.

Luke Fox
Montgomery, NJ
FozzyBare7@aol.com

Damn. He's on to us.

Sure, we're grown-up geeks. But I think some of the staff members here do have lives, albeit small and puny ones. Some even take an active interest in the world outside comics, including some things as hot and cutting-edge as "The X-Files" and Magic: The Gathering!

And I really wouldn't call any of our parties "wild." I think the only ones we've shown in these pages have involved us simply getting blitzed on cheap malt liquor and dressing up like comic characters. Now that's good clean fun for anyone, even someone who takes on a name so daring as "FozzyBare7" as an online handle. Sheesh.

Dear Wizard,
1) What happened to artist Steve Ditko after he left *Amazing Spider-Man*?

2) Did Jack Kirby ever draw Spider-Man?

Keegan Buckingham
Brighton, IA

1) Ditko did Amazing from issue #1 through #38. Upon his leaving, he worked on such projects as Hawk and Dove and Beware the Creeper for DC Comics, and Captain Atom and Blue Beetle for Charlton Comics.

2) Oh, yeah. And in a more historic sense than you might even imagine. Kirby penciled the cover of Amazing Fantasy #15, the first appearance of Spidey. Steve Ditko inked the cover (see above). The story goes that upon seeing the cover, writer and editor Stan Lee thought that Spidey looked too "heroic." Stan wanted Spider-Man to look more like a regular guy, and Ditko's style fit Spidey perfectly.

Hello, Wizards,
I was just wondering: How would one go about breaking into *Wizard*?

Stefan Campbell
m6he8@unb.ca

I recommend waiting until the weekend when there's nobody here. A simple smashing of a window with a tire iron or maybe a crowbar will get you in. But then the alarm will go off. I

PENPALS

Lareese Data
Age: 15 Sex: Female
9910 Bormont
La Porte, TX 77571
Likes: Sailor Moon, *X-Men*, any anime

Kim Boudreaux
Age: 15 Sex: Female
[illegible]
Likes: [illegible]

Philip Sopher
Age: 16 Sex: Male
P.O. Box 7088
Moreno Valley, CA 92557
WXDeadpool@juno.com
Likes: *Deadpool*, *Wolverine*, most X-titles

David Wilson
Age: 16 Sex: Male
[illegible]
Likes: [illegible]

Buck Wilson
Age: 18 Sex: Male
1910 South St.
Cañon City, CO 81212
Likes: all manga and anime, *Spawn*, *Gen*[13]

Carol Rogers
Age: 12 Sex: Female
[illegible]
Likes: [illegible]

David Bashevkin
Age: 13 Sex: Male
91 Lord Avenue
Lawrence, NY 11559
Likes: *Spawn*, X-titles, *Impulse*

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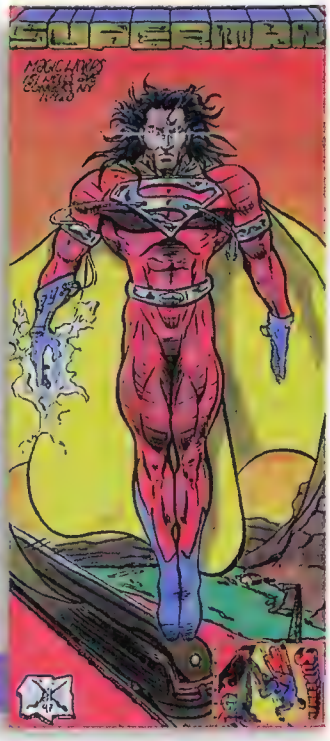
LETTER ART

Fans who got their letter art printed this month will each receive a copy of *Barry Windsor-Smith: Storyteller* #1 autographed by Windsor-Smith in a special slipcase, plus a copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff, a snazzy *Wizard* T-shirt and a funky *Wizard* cap! The creator of the best envelope wins signed copies of *Storyteller* #1-#3 in the slipcase, plus the issue, shirt and cap! (Thanks for the stuff, Barry!) Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address **and a list of characters depicted** on the **back** of your envelope.

THE PRIZE

envelope of the month

SUPERMAN Chad Wm. Porter



SUPERMAN R. Wilkinson

CALVIN & HOBBES Gordon McCue

SCUD CITY Nick Gutierrez

we're in the home stretch...

figure you got five minutes till the cops arrive.

Dear Jim,

In "Magic Words" in *Wizard* #67, a reader named Dusty Dean said he likes it when his girlfriend sleeps in his shirt and leaves it smelling like her. You replied that you like the smell a girlfriend leaves on your pillow. So I figured you knew what he was talking about. I was just wondering: What is a girlfriend? Why would you let it sleep in your shirt? What does one smell like?

Neil R. McAllister
Windsor, CT

A "girlfriend" is a woman with whom you share a romantic interest. Girlfriends are not to be confused with "damsels in distress" or "rewards," as women in comics are often characterized. Ready examples you might be familiar with include "Mary Jane Watson," who started out as Peter Parker's girlfriend, and "Lois Lane," Clark Kent's flame. In comics, as in reality, a man's romantic interest in a girlfriend can often lead to that girlfriend becoming a "wife."

You might let a girlfriend sleep in your shirt simply because you are close to her. Girlfriends usually smell pretty good, and believe me: They're always better in reality than they are in the comics. Try one sometime.

There. I feel like I've done my public service announcement for the month. Until next month, I still remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

Jim McLauchlin thrives on confrontation, fears no stench, butters his bread with adventure and prefers his turkey stuffed with danger. After four or five shots of nitro, he'll dance naked on periodic tables.

Send letters to:
Magic Words
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920
or e-mail us at WizWords@aol.com

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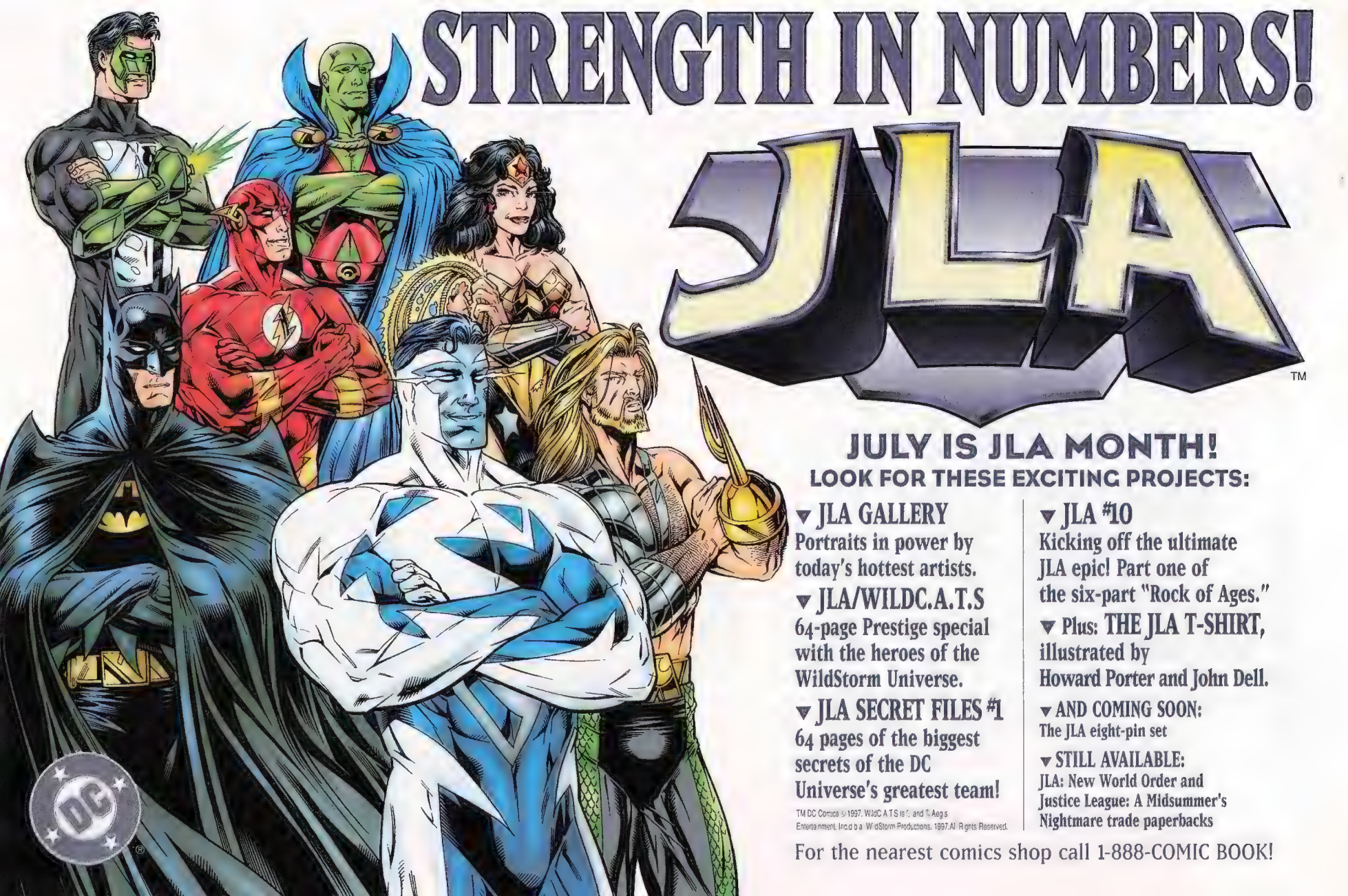
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LEE EXTENDS 'REBORN' RUN

#13 issues, 3 new Marvel books planned

It's finally official!

After months of rumor and innuendo, guesswork and speculation, Marvel Comics has laid out the plans for its current "Heroes Reborn" saga and its future ***Heroes Return*** mini-series. It involves an unexpected extension of "Reborn," new creators for *Return* and...a new opportunity for **Jim Lee** to play in the Marvel sandbox.

EXTRA 'REBORN'

"Heroes Reborn" is the controversial Marvel reboot that took four titles—*Avengers, Captain America, Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man*—and handed them to former big-time Marvel creators Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld for a revitalized new look. Tales that took place in a separate "pocket universe" were scheduled to last 12 months and then return to the Marvel Universe. Or at least that was the plan.

Marvel upped WildStorm Productions Publisher Lee's involvement by having him take over the two former Liefeld-helmed books after six months; Marvel cited low sales as the reason for ending Liefeld's contract early. Now, Marvel's looking for even more from Lee.

"Marvel came to me and asked how I'd feel about doing a 13th issue of each book. I assumed it was to fill a gap in their publishing schedule," Lee said. "I told them it sounded cool to me."

And so, September will see new #13 issues for all four "Heroes Reborn" titles. James Robinson (*Starman, Cable*) will write the four books, all of which will revolve around, according to Lee, "a rift in the Negative Zone. It's the same kind of rift that occurred at the end of [WildStorm's 1996 company crossover] 'Fire From Heaven.' So yes, you can safely assume that the Marvel heroes will interact with a bunch of WildStorm characters in all the #13 issues."

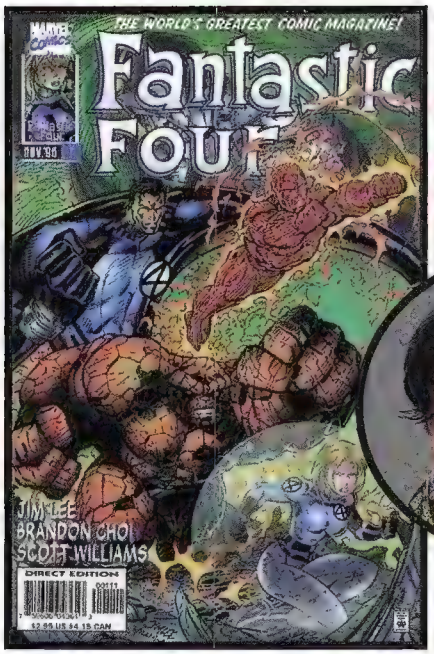
Rumors abound that an amalgamation of characters, much like we've seen in two rounds of Marvel/DC Amalgam Comics, will happen between Marvel and WildStorm. "That's not confirmed yet," said Marvel Marketing Manager John Dokes. "But they do have a Gen^{13} team over at WildStorm and these are the 13th issues. There's a lot of possibility there."

Artists for the four #13 books are not solidified, but will almost undoubtedly be new to "Heroes Reborn." According to Lee, Larry Stroman (*X-Factor*) will be doing one of the books.

THE RETURN

After the #13s, the Marvel Universe finally unifies thanks to the weekly four-issue *Heroes Return* mini-series. Marvel had

Waid and Garney are expected to return to *Captain America*, while Lobdell will handle *FF* (opposite)



originally planned it for September (see "Wizard News," *Wizard* #70), but the mini-series has since been pushed back one month to accommodate the #13 issues. After that, *Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man* return to the Marvel Universe in November, and *Avengers* and *Captain America* come in December. Creative teams for the returned book launches, which in Dokes' words, "are as official as things can get here," consist of:

Avengers—Writer Kurt Busiek (*Astro City*) and penciler George Pérez (*New Teen Titans*)

Captain America—Writer Mark Waid (*Ka-Zar*) and penciler Ron Garney (*Silver Surfer*)

Fantastic Four—Writer Scott Lobdell (*X-Men*) and penciler Alan Davis (*Excalibur*)

Iron Man—Writer Kurt Busiek and penciler Sean Chen (*X-O Manowar*)

Most of the creators have been long rumored as going to these titles, with artists Davis and Chen recently thrown into the mix. Some creators even have a history with their respective titles—Pérez did a long stint on *Avengers* in the 1970s and '80s, and the Waid/Garney team contributed a run on *Cap* just prior to the start of "Heroes Reborn." Plotting is just beginning on the returned books, and is farthest along on *Avengers*, where Pérez said, "Kurt and I have had extensive phone conversations about where we want to go with the book and we have a working plot for the first few issues."

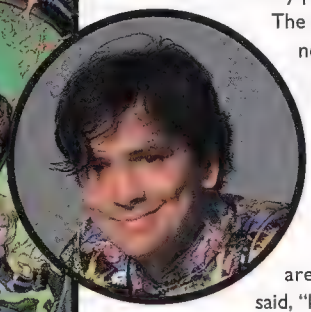
Pérez is licking his chops to get back into the team he once drew. "We've planned a sequence where, by the time you get to the end of page 5 of the first 'returned' issue, I will have drawn every living character who was ever an Avenger."

Lobdell photo: Jay Strauss

FUTURE 'REBORN'?

But the return of the heroes to the friendly confines of the Marvel Universe will not mean the absence of Jim Lee from Marvel.

"I've agreed to do other Marvel books," he said. "Marvel came to me earlier regarding continuing the 'Heroes Reborn' books I was on, but only if I drew one of them. I wouldn't do it, so they proposed other books."



The books chosen to be the next wave revitalized by Lee — ***Defenders***, *Dr. Strange* and *Nick Fury*— all have established characters, and all currently lack an ongoing title.

"I wanted books that are interconnected," Lee said, "kind of like a little family of books to edit." Although Lee will carry no creative credit, he will be listed as editor and wants to act essentially as what he terms, "an executive producer. I want to come up with ideas and hire people to deliver on them. Comic readers may not be familiar with this as a concept, but it's the way things happen all the time in Hollywood. I'll be involved in the creation, but stop short of actually writing the plot or drawing the characters."

Marvel plans all-new #1 issues of *Defenders*, *Dr. Strange* and *Nick Fury* in December, and Marvel Editor-in-Chief **Bob Harras** promised no pocket universe this time. "This will be different from 'Heroes Reborn' in that these are Marvel books with Marvel logos in the Marvel Universe," he said. "We think Jim can do great things with these characters in current continuity."

And that's just fine with Lee. "I want to do some reworking, but in a continuity-based approach as opposed to the blank slate. I think if we just concentrate on and emphasize the parts of each character that are best, it's attainable without wiping it blank."

No creators are slated yet on the new Lee-helmed books, which are all planned as ongoing series.

END OF AN ERA?

According to Marvel, its new deal with Jim Lee is an open-ended one. There's no expiration date, as there was with "Heroes Reborn." But is the Reborn "pocket universe" truly in Marvel's past now that the old deal is over? There's no cataclysm at the end of the #13 issues that would "kill" the universe, according to Lee. "My understanding is all that will be taken care of in the *Heroes Return* mini-series."

But when asked if the events of *Heroes Return* will seal the fate of the old universe, all series writer Peter David would say is, "Now that would be telling. I'm saving something for the big ending, and I won't give my ending away." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

Odor-weary convention-goer sports fashionable defense against comic con smells. Asked where he came up with the idea, masked freak responded, "Mmmph mmm mmbble... MMMARGH!" before being savaged by gang of greasy fanboys.

Armored Avenger Iron Man returns lost shopping bag to thankful little girl. "Domo arrigato, Mr. Roboto," said teary-eyed girl.

Photo: Paul Schmidt

Marvel Launches "Heroes Reborn" replacement title, Pigeon Man. "I have the power to command the world's foulest and dirtiest creatures," bellowed deranged madman moments before being defecated on and pecked to death.

ahead

GEN[13]/GEN X CROSS OVER!

HALLOWEEN CONTEST!

AND COMPANY UPDATES!

Gen[13]: New Members in, Campbell Out

Get ready for the new and improved Gen[13].

"We're slating creative changes, character changes and a new direction that will all come to a head by issue #25," said WildStorm Editor-in-Chief **Jim Lee**. "Things had gotten a little complacent. So we're going to shake 'em up."

Creative changes in *Gen[13]* start with issue #21, hitting in July. The mondo-popular art team of penciler **J. Scott Campbell** and inker **Alex Garner** will be leaving the book, to be replaced by Al Rio (who filled in on *Gen[13]* #15) on pencils and inks. Regular writer Brandon Choi will continue to write the series, and Campbell and Garner will stick around to do covers through issue #24.

Gen[13] #25, scheduled for a December shipping, debuts a new line-up for the team as the Gen[13] crew meets WildStorm's other teen team, DV8. The issue promises to reshape each team for the foreseeable future and assess why each character is on each team.

"No one is dying, but there will be some fallings-out and some new relationships," said Lee.

Though Lee would not comment on which characters would wind up where, he did announce that two new characters—named Freestyle and Crackpot—would be introduced.

So when all is said and done, where does Campbell end up?

"Leaving after *Gen[13]* #20 frees me and Alex up to work on the ***Gen[13]/Batman*** crossover scheduled for November," he said. "And the passing of the *Gen[13]* torch allows me to get started on a creator-owned title for WildStorm that I'm looking to debut by mid-1998." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Gen[13] #20 will be the last issue by Campbell

Robinson Joins 'Ash' with New #1

The main Event begins in November.

That's when Event Comics' ***Ash*** begins shipping monthly with a brand-new #1 issue. And yes, the regular art team of co-creators **Joe Quesada** and **Jimmy Palmiotti** will be on board.

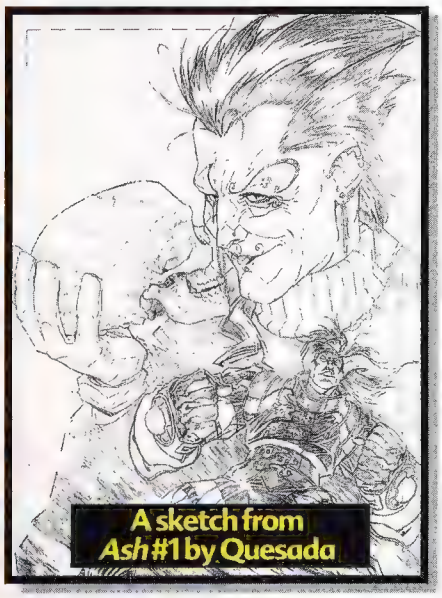
"I swear we'll be on time," said *Ash* inker Palmiotti. "The plan is, a year from now we'll be on #12, and in 10 years we'll be on #120."

But the new *Ash* brings in a new player: writer **James Robinson** (*Cable, Starman*).

"I was absolutely impressed with James' work on [the DC Comics mini-series] *The Golden Age*," Quesada said. "He really raises the stakes. Jimmy and I have to do our absolute best work to keep up with James Robinson."

The first four issues of the new *Ash* monthly have been fully plotted, and Robinson is already working on the second story arc. "The first arc will wrap up all the hanging plot threads from the *Ash: The Fire Within* mini-series," Palmiotti said. The first four issues will also delve into The Actor's past. "He's been Ash's number one nemesis since day one," Quesada said. "We'll get into what makes him so powerful and we'll see what makes him tick. We'll find out about his parents, his background, the whole magilla. And since he's kind of Ash's villainous doppelganger, as we're delving into the Actor, we'll also explore Ashley's past and the past of his father."

In addition to the new continuing monthly *Ash* series, Quesada and Palmiotti plan on releasing the occasional mini-series, like the *Ash: Cinder and Smoke* six-parter currently on the stands. ■ *Don Butler*



A sketch from *Ash* #1 by Quesada

BUZZ BOX

The inside scoop on the comic industry

• **X-Titles Canceled!** After this summer's "Zero Tolerance" crossover, sources inside Marvel indicate that two X-titles will be canceled, and possibly replaced by two new ones. Bandied about were *X-Factor* and *Excalibur*, but nothing is settled upon.

• **Wolverine Shuffle!** Grapevine sez that Steven T. Seagle (*Alpha Flight*) will soon get the plum writing assignment on *Wolverine* this fall. Where's that leave current *Wolvie* scribe Larry Hama? He may be moving on to double-duty on *Generation X* and *Elektra*.

• **No Rest for the Wicked!** Word on the street is that Chaos! Comics ain't givin' Lady Death much of a rest. A new mini-series, tentatively titled *Wicked Ways*, may see print before the end of the year. Chaos! may even wedge a *Lady Death* #0 in before the year is up too.

• **Kabuki in Play!** *Kabuki*, the cult crime-espionage series by David Mack is being lusted after by no fewer than four big-name comic publishers and no fewer than one cable network called "HBO." Look for Mack to make some big decisions in the near future.

CORRECTION!

We incorrectly reported in *Wizard* #70's "Market Watch" that Marvel's *Ka-Zar* title is an X-Men group title. It is in fact a Marvel Heroes title. And a good one too!

Battle Rages for Star Wars License

Comic publishers are using their Force to fight for the **Star Wars** license.

Four major comic book companies—**Dark Horse**, **DC**, **Marvel** and **WildStorm**—recently traveled to Skywalker Ranch in San Rafael, Calif., and gave presentations to Lucasfilm Ltd. in hopes of obtaining the coveted rights to make Star Wars comics come 1999.

Dark Horse Comics, which gained the rights in 1991, currently has the license through December 31, 1998. The next licensing period will cover the time frame of 1999 through 2004.

"Lucasfilm sent us a letter reminding us that our license was up at the end of next year," said Lou Bank, vice-president of sales and marketing at Dark Horse. "And they asked us if we would present again. We did."

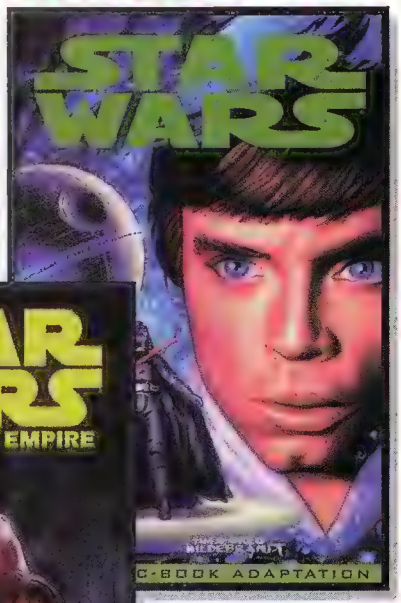
In late April and early May, the four companies put together multi-media presentations that demonstrated what they would do with the license. WildStorm presented all-new artwork, some by WildStorm Publisher **Jim Lee** himself, of a proposed mini-series entitled *Star Wars: Blue Harvest* (the working title of "Return of the Jedi").

"Basically, I gave a detailed six-year publishing plan for what I would do with the license," said Lee. "I showed the kind of talent that would work on them if we got the license. I already know that I would draw something, **J. Scott Campbell** would draw something, and **Peter David** and **James Robinson** have expressed interest in writing."

So who has the inside track? Tough to say. DC and Marvel wouldn't comment on their presentation, and Lucasfilm is tight-lipped about the whole shebang.

"It is our policy to review licenses after a set amount of time," said Jeannie Cole, a publicity representative for Lucasfilm. "However, any licensing meetings we have are confidential."

■ *Matthew Senreich*



The Star Wars comic license is up for grabs—and only one of four publishers will get it

Teen Teams Meet in Gen[13]/Generation X Crossover

Art Adams returns to a team book with *Gen[13]/Gen X*

Hormones run wild as **Generation X**, Marvel's teenage mutants, link up with WildStorm teen sensations **Gen[13]** in July.

Regular *Gen[13]* writer Brandon Choi and inker Alex Garner are joined by penciler **Art Adams** (*Monkeyman and O'Brien*) for a 32-page *Gen[13]/Generation X* one-shot published by WildStorm Productions. Two different covers, one by Adams and one by *Gen[13]* penciler **J. Scott Campbell**, will be available in equal quantities. And WildStorm Editor-in-Chief **Jim Lee** promises that the action will start on page one.

"As with all the WildStorm/Marvel crossovers, we are assuming that our continuity and universes are the same for the purpose of the crossover," Lee said. "Like the *Spider-Man/Backlash* crossover, there won't have to be anything confusing done to get the characters together."

The story begins as Gen[13] villain Trance and Generation X baddie Emplate orchestrate the two teams into a battle against each other. Both Trance and Emplate have an interest in a mysterious character. "This character, who both [Gen[13] mentor] Lynch and Banshee know from the past, resurfaces. He's at the center of the story," said Adams. "He's got a power that both Emplate and Trance are interested in getting a hold of. And we're not sure as to whether he is a villain or a hero."

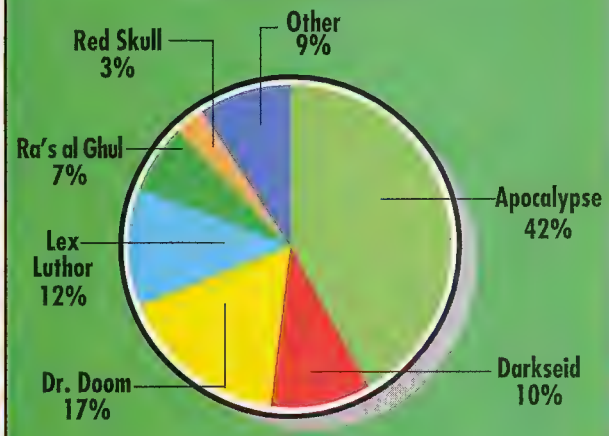
Along with the typical superheroics, a heavy dose of fun is promised. "I've always loved drawing superhero team books," said Adams. "There will be a lot of panels, a lot of characters and a lot of enjoyment."

"And as with any fun-loving meeting of teenagers," Lee added, "characters from both teams will develop crushes on each other. What else would you expect? They're teenagers, and they're looking for…fun." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Villains always lose, right? But let's say one of them ultimately wins and conquers the world. Who would it be? We asked our fans through our Wizard World forum on America Online.

WHICH SUPERVILLAIN HAS THE BEST CHANCE TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD?



"Apocalypse has been alive for centuries and has been learning, biding his time," posted one fan. "Look at 'Age of Apocalypse.' He's destined to conquer the world. It's just a matter of when."

Brain power seemed to be a big deciding factor for our online friends. Dr. Doom and Lex Luthor, two villainous masterminds, both garnered lots of votes, with the main rationale being that they could manipulate their way into power. "Lex has economic power and Doom runs a nation [Latveria]," said one fan. "The way to conquer a world is through political or economic means. That being the case, Doom or Lex would own it." ■ *Conrad Bain*

Vertigo Editor Stathis Succumbs to Cancer

Vertigo Editor **Lou Stathis** passed away on May 4, 1997 after a 10-month struggle with brain cancer. He was 44 years old.

Stathis is remembered as a champion of alternative music and comics, who gained a reputation for his candor as an editor. Artist Bob Fingerman recalled the first time he contributed to *Heavy Metal* magazine, where Stathis was an associate editor.

"I did a fully painted strip," said Fingerman. "While everyone in the office was admiring the piece, Lou looked at it and said, 'Uh, nice to see you hired a real artist to do something for us.' He was very, very brutally honest and always said exactly what he thought. It was one of the things I liked most about him. You always knew what he was really thinking."

Artist Peter Kuper, who created the wordless Vertigo graphic novel *The System*, said Stathis liked pushing the envelope.

"*The System* was a real victory for both us. I never expected it to be published, but this was the kind of thing he was pushing for when he came on as an editor at Vertigo," Kuper said.

Stathis started working for Vertigo in the middle of 1993. At various times, he edited *Animal Man, Black Orchid, Hellblazer, Doom Patrol, Industrial Gothic* and *Prez*.

Prior to working for Vertigo, Stathis served stints as editor-in-chief of *Reflex* magazine and managing editor of *High Times* magazine. He also wrote for several magazines including *Spin, Rip, Punk* and *Details*. ■ *Paul M. Anderson*

we LOOKED it up

Cytt•or•ak, Ruby of (sit OR ack) Marvel Universe, *noun* 1 cursed gem containing the trapped essence of a powerful multi-dimensional deity; unleashes power upon any who touch it making them a "juggernaut of destruction" 2 that which gave Cain Marko his power, transforming him into the X-Men foe the Juggernaut

'X-Files Season One' Finally Debuts

"It's been 18 months in the making," said Editor Dwight Jon Zimmerman, "but it's finally here and it will not disappoint."

Zimmerman's referring to **Topps Comics**' August release of the long-awaited *X-Files: Season One* series.

"Fans wrote and told us how much they wanted to see 'X-Files' episodes in comic form," said Zimmerman. "So we used *X-Files #0* to test the waters, adapting the pilot episode. The response was fantastic."

X-Files Season One

Long discussions ensued with Twentieth Century Fox and Ten-Thirteen Productions, which led to the go-ahead to adapt all the "X-Files" episodes. "The people at Fox insisted on a different look than our regular *X-Files* title," Zimmerman continued. "So we're making it different with fully painted art. We all think that the painted look captures the feel of the TV show wonderfully." Topps also turned to an experienced adapter for *Season One:* veteran comics writer **Roy Thomas**.

Thomas, who adapted "Star Wars" for Marvel Comics, noted that the most difficult thing about adaptations is deciding what to keep in the story. "I have to drop things, actually. TV and comics aren't the same medium. What might be clear on television won't be quite as clear in a comic, and vice-versa."

Thomas has discovered that he also needs a tape of the show. "First I read the script and work on a version of the comic script that's very close," said Thomas. Then he watches the video and modifies the comic to catch changes made on the set and not included in the script.

X-Files Season One: Pilot Episode, a reprint of *X-Files #0*, ships August 1 with art by **John Van Fleet**, and *X-Files Season One: Deep Throat* ships August 8 with pencils by **Claude St. Aubin**, inks by Rick Magyar and painted color by Van Fleet. The series will continue bi-monthly and cover all episodes in chronological order.

"*Season One* is just the title for now, of course," Zimmerman added. "The goal is to keep going until we've adapted all the episodes." ■ *Dallas Middaugh*

'JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY' TO LAUNCH NEW TITLES

In September, Marvel Comics' *Journey into Mystery* will finally live up to its name. With issue #514, it becomes a grab bag that new *JiM* Editor Joe Andreani called, "a place where we can introduce new characters, take a closer look at some older ones or just try any damn thing we want."

Andreani, who takes over as editor with the revamp, starts out with a four-issue story arc written by Ben Raab (*Excalibur*) and penciled by newcomer Brian Hagen, featuring Shang-Chi, Master of Kung-Fu. This story will lead into a Shang-Chi mini-series currently scheduled to hit in early 1998.

After that, Andreani wants to use the book to spotlight top talent. A space-faring project featuring all-new characters by Scott Lobdell (*X-Men*) and Pop Mhan (*Ghost Rider*) is on tap, as are original creations from Claudio Castellini (*Marvel versus DC, Conan*). Future issues of *Journey* will be done by different teams of writers and artists in multiple-issue story arcs, as is Andreani's plan. "This will be a place that hopefully launches new titles," he said. "And the rotating nature of the book will give creators enough time to do their best-quality work. I think we'll find some real gems here." ■ *Dallas Middaugh*

Vampirella/Shi to Team Up

Alert the funeral homes and wake the morticians! Harris Comics' **Vampirella** will be joining Crusade Entertainment's **Shi** to make mayhem this fall.

The popular female ninja (Shi) and vampire (uh...that's Vampirella) will team up in two separate one-shots written by *DV8* scribe **Warren Ellis**. Each company will produce one of the books—Harris' *Vampirella/Shi* appears in September, followed by Crusade's *Shi/Vampirella* in October. Longtime Vampi artist **Louis Small Jr.** and *X-Force* inker Mark Morales will provide art for *Vampirella/Shi*, and Roberto Flores (*Angel Fire*) is handling the art chores for *Shi /Vampirella*.

"Each book is self-contained and can be read all by itself," Ellis said. "In effect, Vampirella and Shi meet each other for the first time in each one."

Vampirella/Shi will be two one-shots

Harris' *Vampirella/Shi* revolves around the power vacuum caused by the crimelord Arashi's fall from power in *Shi*. The story is partially based on a chapter from Chinese general/philosopher Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, Ellis said. The story's title "Nine Kinds of Ground," is taken directly from *War*.

"*Vampirella/Shi* is basically a crime story," he said, "wherein it transpires that both ladies are intent on killing the same person. However, they get to a point where one of them needs to keep killing and the other one needs to prevent the other."

As for *Shi/Vampirella*, Ellis said the plot is "based on an old Japanese vampire legend. We basically re-enact this ancient Japanese fable in the middle of modern-day New York."

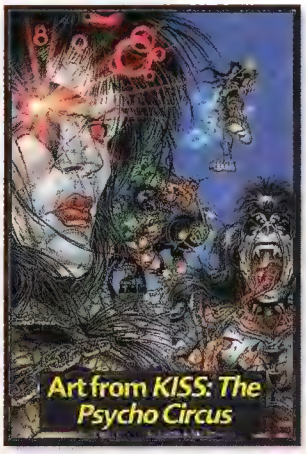
Each 32-page book will carry a $2.95 price tag. ■ *Greg Orlando*

Todd Lures KISS to McFarlane Productions

Mega-rockers KISS are still on tour and coming to a comic shop near you. But this time, the scalpers aren't going to make out like bandits. Tickets to this show are only $1.95.

The new ***KISS: The Psycho Circus*** comic debuts in July from **Todd McFarlane Productions** as the first KISS comic *not* published by Marvel Comics. Marvel had previously published KISS comics in 1976, '78 and '96, but according to KISS frontman and lead singer **Gene Simmons**, a switch has been made to McFarlane out of "respect for what he's done, and a longtime admiration of his *Spawn* comic." Simmons also said the theme of the comic is inspired by a KISS tour idea. "The concept came from us," he said. "'The Psycho Circus' is a tour theme we're working on, and we may even use the title for an album."

In comic format, *Circus* brings readers "modern-day gothic horror in the essence of KISS," said Beau Smith, Todd McFarlane Productions sales and marketing director, who actually pitched in to help write issue #1. "A traveling circus of the damned, which includes the band members, travels the country and encounters different people in different situations. The stories will be similar to the old EC Comics horror titles of the '50s, because at the end, there will be some sort of reward or punishment for the characters based on the circumstances."



Art from *KISS: The Psycho Circus*

The ongoing monthly title will be plotted by KISS and McFarlane, and scripted by Brian Hagan (*Cyberforce*). The art is being handled by **Angel Medina** (*Incredible Hulk*) and Kevin Conrad (*Spawn*), with legendary cover man **Michael Golden** supplying covers.

The plotting process, according to Simmons, is a very cooperative one. "We play ball," he said. "I throw something to Todd, he throws it back. I'm always kept in the loop, but I leave Todd to his own devices when it comes to actual production and taking things the final step. I think what he does, he does out of a love of comics. And that's a love I share." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

Scary Godmother

Lookee here! Creator **Jill Thompson** (*Sandman, Wonder Woman*) rolls out *Scary Godmother*, a 40-page, fully painted creator-owned project from **Sirius Entertainment** in September. It's the tale of young Hannah Marie, as she meets her Scary Godmother on her first Halloween out trick-or-treating. Check out this cool preview art!

Marvel Ventures into Horror Genre

Editor **Ralph Macchio** wants to make Marvel Comics a scary place. "We're looking to do things that expand our horizons in the Marvel Universe beyond simple superheroes," he said.

And Marvel's vehicle for expansion is horror, with three new launches in October. An earlier plan called for a new imprint called "Marvel Macabre," but that was scrapped in favor of keeping the titles part of the "regular" Marvel line. October's new horror titles include:

• ***Werewolf by Night***—Paul Jenkins (*Hellblazer*) writes and Paul Lee (*Amazing Fantasy* #16-#18) pencils this three-issue mini series. "Jack Russell, the werewolf, has gained some control over his transformation," Macchio said. "But the instant of that transformation takes him to Hell in quite a literal way. This series is about Jack the man and his dealing with the terrible curse he has."

• ***Satana***—The Daughter of Marvel's Satan is written by horror specialist Warren Ellis (*DV8*), with art to be determined. This ongoing series deals with Satana's quest to control all that is magical in the Marvel Universe for herself. "Her main adversary will be Lilith, Queen of Vampires," Macchio continued, "because Lilith would fear her power if Satana achieves this. Plus, Lilith wants to make vampirism the primary religion of the 21st century."

• ***Man-Thing***—Writer J.M. DeMatteis (*Spectacular Spider-Man*) and artist Liam Sharp (*Incredible Hulk*), who will handle both pencils and inks, handle creative chores here. *Man-Thing* editor Mark Bernardo said that the aftermath of "Onslaught" and the creation of the "Heroes Reborn" pocket universe has broken Marvel's reality. "The Nexus of all Realities that Man-Thing guards has been shattered and scattered throughout the world," Bernardo said. "Man-Thing's quest is to put it all back together before reality as we know it ends."

Marvel is hoping to expand this line, with new releases in 1998. "I want to stress that these are *not* Vertigo books," Macchio said. "We're doing true horror here and we're not going to tiptoe around the gruesome parts. But we're not going to just shock people. That's too easy. We want to unsettle them." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

'Y2' Relaunches Youngblood

Rob Liefeld is returning to his roots.

"*Judgment Day* lays the groundwork for the new Awesome Universe, and it's basically a **Youngblood** story," said Liefeld, president of Awesome Entertainment. "So after everything shakes out, it makes sense that we roll out the new Youngblood."

Liefeld and Awesome Entertainment do just that with *Y2*, the new title that redefines the Youngblood team. *Y2* #1, slated for a late fall release, sees Liefeld return as artist to the team that launched the Image Universe back in 1992 with *Youngblood* #1. But this time, he has a new writer in tow: the acclaimed **Alan Moore** (*Supreme, Watchmen*).

"The thing I'm trying to do," Moore said, "is restart Youngblood as a less sprawling, more dynamic team." Less sprawling means cutting back the number of characters to six. Current team leader Shaft and existing Awesome character Suprema will be joined by a group of four new heroes: Johnny Panic, Big Brother, Doc Rocket and Twilight. "If you have more characters than that," Moore continued, "the action gets cluttered and it becomes increasingly difficult to establish each character as a real and solid person in their own right."

Characterization will be a hallmark of the book, said Liefeld. "The flavor that Alan's looking for is very much like *New Teen Titans* or the early issues of *Uncanny X-Men*," he said. "The new characters are all Alan's and he's going to mold them into something really cool."

Liefeld also thinks that the mere presence of Moore will help *him* crank out something really cool. "He really elevates your work," Liefeld said of Moore. "He's enthusiastic about the project, and I don't want him to lose any of that enthusiasm when he sees the pages. You always want to impress Alan Moore." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

A sketch of Shaft's new costume by Liefeld

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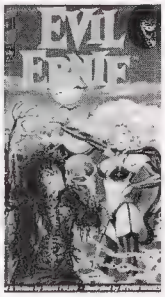
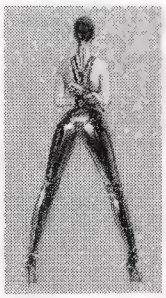
James Robinson



Brian Pulido
Steven Hughes
Jason Jenson &
Justiniano from
Chaos! Comics



Sorayama

Razor
Everette Hartsoe

Joe Jusko

5 Lucky Advance Tickets holders will win dinner with Brain Pulido on Saturday evening.
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Grell Resurrects Jon Sable

Jon Sable, freelance mercenary, is back in business.

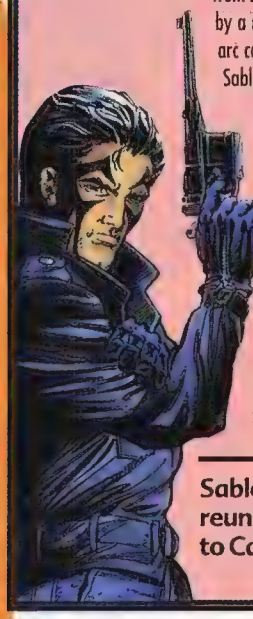
Creator **Mike Grell**, who wrote and drew 43 issues of *Jon Sable, Freelance* for First Comics in the 1980s, returns with a new *JSF* in October published by **Caliber Comics**.

Photo: Al Ortega

"The first story arc reintroduces old readers to the character and brings them up to speed," Grell said. "At the same time, I'll give new readers the entire background and history, while telling a completely new story."

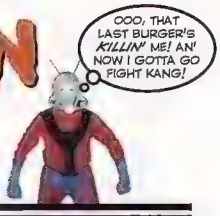
The first three-issue story places Sable in Africa, where his job is to steal diamonds from a mine that's being taken over by a new government. The second arc continues the Africa theme, as Sable investigates a series of ritual killings. The new series also features a new art style.

"I'll have black-and-white interiors," Grell continued. "I plan to use a blend of different techniques, from pen and ink to pencil and charcoal. Hopefully, it'll represent the distillation of 24 years of artistic development." ■ *Don Butler*



Sable and Grell reunite this fall, thanks to Caliber

HALLOWEEN HAVOC!



Yeah, yeah. We know Halloween's months away. But the sixth annual *Wizard* Halloween Costume Contest is underway, and we want you to get off yer lazy duff and enter! Where else can you dress up like your favorite character and show all of comicdom what a goofball you are? Besides, if we pick you as our Grand Prize Winner, you'll walk off with a prize so monstrous, we can't even tell ya what it is until next month. But trust us, it's really, really big and it'll make all of your friends super-jealous. And yeah, there'll be a buncha Runner-Up prizes too, just in case you're not top dog.

Anyway, here's how you enter:

1) Dress up like anyone (or anything) you want—comic book character, video game character, something out of a book or movie, whatever (the more original your getup, the better your chances of winning).

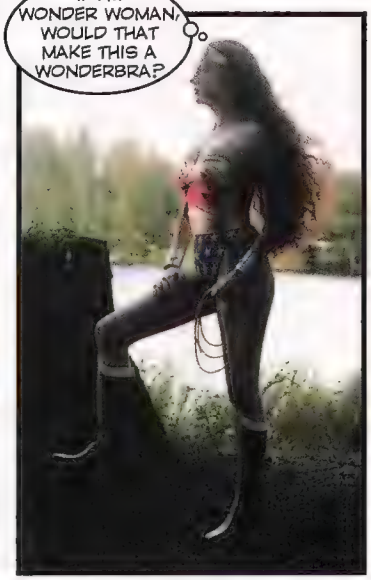
2) The actual costume itself must be HOMEMADE, but you can add store-bought items to accent your outfit. For example, you can't go out and buy a Spidey mask for your Spider-Man costume, but you can use a toy gun for your Punisher costume. Get it?

3) Have someone photograph you in your costume (Polaroids will NOT be accepted!), then write your name, age, full address, phone number and name of the character you're dressed as on a small piece of paper, attach it to the back of the photo (don't write on the photo!), and send it to the address below. All photos must be color prints, and we suggest taking multiple shots with multiple poses in case some pictures suck. And remember that magic five-letter word: "focus."

4) To be eligible to win, **we must receive your photo by August 15, 1997**, so move it, move it, move it!

Send your entry to:
Costume Contest 6
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-0118

Last year's winner, Rebecca Avello (wearing a gorgeous Wonder Woman costume) won a whole bunch of Batman "Holoween" goodies including a complete *Batman Holo Series* card set, autographed copies of *Batman: The Long Halloween* and original Tim Sale art from *The Long Halloween*.



DOUBLE TAKES

Marvel characters in a regular DC comic? Maybe. Check out *JLA* #1, page 10. In the middle of the page are figures that look a heckuva lot like Wolverine and Dr. Doom. Are they? We went straight to the source—Howard Porter, artist of *JLA*. His response?

"Oh, that's not Wolverine and Doom. They just *look* like them. Yeah, they're...old Justice League villains. That's it. Honest!"

Seriously, folks, it's just a goof that Porter thought would be a bit of fun. When we called Marvel, it was mobilizing a large team of flesh-eating zombie lawyers, and thus was unavailable for comment.

byte this

WHAT'S UP ON WIZARD WORLD

LIVE FROM CHICAGO: WIZARD WORLD ONLINE!

Join Wizard World's online staff, Marvel Online and DC Online for the First Annual Online Summit at this year's Chicago Comicon, July 4-6 at the Rosemont Convention Center! It's your chance to meet the people behind the screen names!

Wizard World online staff in attendance will include Buddy Scalera (WizardTGTC), Mike Fasolo (WizMikeF), Glenn Haight (WizGlen), Ruth Morrison (WizRuthM), Joanna Starer (WizFoonie), Sean Jordan (SeanJordan) and practically the entire *Wizard* editorial staff. Heck, we're even gonna bring the Big Cheese himself, Gareb Shamus!

Photo: Paul Schedd

Also, Wizard World rocks the house with Offspring when we give away three—count 'em—three custom snow boards with the logo of the ultra-hot band Offspring! Check out the "Contest" button on Wizard World for details on how to win. They're fun to ride! And cool!

And just for kicks and giggles, we've also joined forces with Elektra recording artists Busta Rhymes and Rampage for *another* hot new contest. Wizard World fans can create a superhero for a special rap music promotional, with winners walking away with merchandise including CDs and T-shirts. Check out Wizard Online for complete contest details.

On America Online, Keyword: Wizard.

CHAT HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE SPECIAL EVENTS ROOM

JULY 10 (Thursday)
- **MYSTERY GUEST CHAT** (Guess who it is!)

Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

JULY 19 (Saturday)
- **INDY COMICS CHAT**

Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)

JULY 28 (Monday)
- **BREAKING IN WITH DAVID CAMPITI**

Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

Check online for full chat schedules including club-hosted chats.

Photo: Harry Pearson

WANT ONE? GOTTA CHECK WIZARD ONLINE!

■ *Buddy Scalera* (WizardTGTC@aol.com)

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ALTERNATIVE PRESS
In August, Ed Brubaker (**Lowlife**) publishes his new ongoing series *Detour*.

ANTARCTIC PRESS
In August, **Warrior Nun Areala** slashes into a new introductory video pack that showcases the upcoming full-length video release of spring 1998. Three separate packages are available: the video alone at $9.95; a Collector's Pack with a special Warrior Nun action figure at $34.95; and a Limited-Edition Collector's Pack with the action figure and an original animation cel.

AVATAR PRESS
In August, Matt Martin's ***Snowman*** #0 debuts at Avatar with the long-awaited origin of the Snowman.

AWESOME ENTERTAINMENT
July's *Agent: America* #1 ships with four variant covers by artists **Ian Churchill**, Rob Liefeld, Stephen Platt and Christian Torres....Ever a fan of comic nostalgia, **Alan Moore** is cranking out an "80 Page Giant" in August with *Supreme* #52. The book is broken into two 40-page books, #52A and #52B.

CARTOON BOOKS
Jeff Smith contributes a four-page, full-color *Bone* story for ***Heavy Metal's*** 20th anniversary edition that hits stands in October. This all-new story will also see print as the prologue in the fourth *Bone* graphic novel, entitled "Dragonslayer."

Purgatori: The Vampire's Myth

CHAOS! COMICS
August's *Purgatori: The Vampire's Myth* trade paperback is available in a limited edition of 2,000, autographed by artist **Jim Balent** and including a copy of the CD soundtrack for $30.

CREATIVE FRONTIERS
In July, ***Lost Stories*** #2 hits stands and delves deeper into the fantastic mystery behind the Lost Souls and their interest in I.M. Lost, the main character.

CRUSADE ENTERTAINMENT
This August brings "The Shi Revolution," a major relaunch of Crusade's most popular character. ***Shi: The Series*** is launched as the first ongoing series starring the heroine. The title is by Tony Bedard, J.G. Jones and Caesar.

DARK HORSE COMICS
Price buster alert! **Frank Miller**'s *Sin City: Family Values* stars the silent-but-deadly assassin Miho and comes in at 128 pages for a mere $10. Look for it in September....*Star Wars: Protocol Offensive* is a 48-page one-shot plotted by late novelist Brian Daley, with C-3PO actor **Anthony Daniels** providing the dialogue for Threepio. It ships in September....The three-issue *Aliens: Alchemy* by John Arcudi and **Richard Corben** starts in September....*The Art of Comic Book Inking* is a 112-page paperback by inker Gary Martin along with tons of inkers including **Brian Bolland**, Steve Rude and Terry Austin. It's a September release with a $14.95 cover price.

EVENT COMICS
Hey, "MST3K" fans—the September one-shot *Here Come the Big People* brings together "Mystery Science Theater 3000" writer/actor Trace Beaulieu and *Vampirella* artist Amanda Conner. **Joe Quesada** and Geof Darrow supply variant covers.

Sleepwalking #3

HALL OF HEROES
In August, Hall of Heroes releases ***Sleepwalking*** #3, the stunning conclusion to the first three-issue story arc that promises to leave you shocked!

HARRIS COMICS
August's *Vampirella: Blood Lust* #2 (of 2) by James Robinson and **Joe Jusko** sees Vampirella in the precarious position of having to kill her mother Lilith to save her home planet of Drakulon.

IMAGE COMICS
Fans of *The Tenth* mini-series should look for the start of the ongoing monthly series in September by the same creative team of Beau Smith and **Tony Daniel**.

• HIGHBROW ENTERTAINMENT
Long-standing supporting characters Barbaric and Ricochet get married in September's ***Savage Dragon*** #41. Guest stars aplenty will attend the wedding.

• HOMAGE COMICS
Terry Moore's *Strangers in Paradise* will be leaving Homage this fall and returning to Abstract Studio. August's issue #8 is the final Homage issue. More news next month.

• SHADOWLINE, INK.
Jump on the weird sci-fi ***Ship of Fools*** as it relaunches at Image with a brand new #0 issue in August.

• TOP COW COMICS
Witchblade #17, coming your way in August, leads in to Top Cow's **Witchblade/Darkness** crossover in September and October.

• WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS
August's *WildC.A.T.s/X-Men: The Modern Age* by James Robinson, **Adam Hughes** and Mark Farmer sports an alternate cover by Paul Smith....Celebrating the *WildC.A.T.s'* fifth anniversary in August is a full-color 3-D version of *WildC.A.T.s* #1, as well as a 3-D version of ***Gen^{13}/Generation X***. Price is $4.95 apiece, and yes, glasses are included.

KITCHEN SINK PRESS
Alan Moore writes "Last Night I Dreamed of Dr. Cobra" for Kitchen Sink's *The Spirit: The New Adventures* #3 out in August. Brian Bolland will provide the cover art.

LIGHTNING COMICS
August brings *Sinthia*, a new series starring a devil's daughter who decides to walk—and party—with mortals, and maybe even find a boyfriend.

MARVEL COMICS
Apocalypse guest-stars in July's *Incredible Hulk* #456....Classic Spidey villain **Doctor Octopus** returns in *Amazing Spider-Man* #426....More mutants! The ongoing *Maverick* and the first issue of a ***Gambit*** mini-series ship in July....August sees a *Dr. Strange* one-shot by **P. Craig Russell**....**Alex Ross** provides a painted cover to August's *Squadron Supreme* trade paperback.

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT
The "Horned God" is a 22" X 34" painted poster by **Joseph Michael Linsner** shipping in August. Retail is $5.95.

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS
Jamie goes out with a sexy, yet strange, psychic in August's ***Copybook Tales*** #6.

TOPPS COMICS
Variant covers hit Topps in August as *The X-Files* #33 comes with a one-in-five photo cover. Also that month, *Xena: Warrior Princess* #1 ships with a **J. Scott Campbell/Michael Golden**-drawn cover or an alternate photo cover.

VIZ COMICS
August sees the debut of **Eat-Man**, a mercenary with truly bizarre powers. When Eat-Man swallows a weapon, he is able to transform the flesh of his arm into the mechanism he ingested. *Eat-Man* #1 (of 6) is by Akhito Yoshitomi.

VEROTIK COMICS
Glenn Danzig and **Simon Bisley** contribute a full-color, 48-page story in *Verotik Illustrated* #1 in August.

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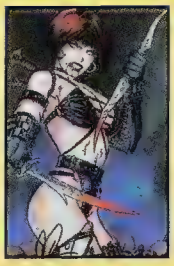

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BUMMIN' AROUND

DC's satirical 'Major Bummer' tackles a superpowered teen without a cause

"With great power comes great responsibility." That's what Spider-Man taught us. But all Lou Martin's trying to teach us is that with great power, you can probably scam free cable TV.

Who's Lou Martin? Why, just the star of DC Comics' new ongoing series *Major Bummer*. Starting up in June, writer John Arcudi describes the title as "a bizarre comedy/action/satire that will hopefully be completely different than anything else out there and be damn funny at the same time." Joining Arcudi is penciler Doug Mahnke, his partner from Dark Horse Comics' *The Mask*, to bring you the adventures of Lou Martin, our 19-year-old hero without a cause.

"Lou is definitely super, but I don't know if you could call him a hero," says Arcudi. "And he's only in the most remote of fashions 'Major Bummer.' It's not like that's a name people will call him by."

What Lou does have is super-strength and super-intelligence. There's just one problem, notes Arcudi: "He really has no desire whatsoever to be heroic. That notion of responsibility isn't too strong in him. He's basically Superman in terms of raw power. And he's smart enough that he might be able to cure cancer if he applied himself, but he'd rather use his brain to try and steal cable."

With his layabout attitude, Lou's not exactly what you'd call "worthy" of superpowers in the traditional comic sense. And he doesn't get his powers in a traditional way, either. "Zinnac and Yoof, two alien brothers from the planet Oraz, are working on their college thesis," Arcudi says. "They're studying what happens to normal Earthlings when they get superpowers. They carefully research who should get powers, and deliver them—no lie—through packages in the mail. Problem is, a package for 'Martin Louis' gets delivered to 'Louis Martin.' Lou was never supposed to get these powers."

Things get stranger when a whole ensemble of superpowered characters appear. "For the stupidest reasons you can imagine, four superheroes and a cat [see sidebar] show up on Lou's doorstep and try to adopt Lou as their leader," Arcudi continues. "Lou wants nothing to do with them, but they keep hanging around."

The supporting cast plays an important role in the book, according to Arcudi, as each character's power will open new story possibilities. "Their abilities may seem lame now, but they'll all evolve," he adds. "And these powers were all carefully chosen. Trust me, they're not just thrown out there willy-nilly."

While there are plenty of superpowers to go around, the emphasis of the book is on laughs, not heroics. "Lou doesn't have superhero priorities," Arcudi continues. "When a 'teammate' breaks his car window, Lou wants to get $130 out of him to replace it. When Zinnac and Yoof first show up, Lou's not concerned that there are two aliens in his living room. He's just mad that they ate the

BY JIM McLAUCHLIN

Meet Lou Martin: the super-strong super-intelligent slacker who has no desire whatsoever to be a hero

last of his macaroni and cheese."

And yes, Arcudi promises there will be traditional superhero stories, but with a weird twist. "One of the aliens sneezes," he says. "And in our atmosphere, the alien germs metamorphosize into giant worms that attack the city. I want to take stories that another writer would do as a straight superhero story and treat them in a comedic fashion. There have been plenty of alien threats in comics, but I can't think of one that came out of someone's nose."

Thing is, Lou actually doesn't want to fight the worms. But if he wants to save his apartment, he's got to fight 'em, since there's really no other heroes around. "Technically, we're part of the DC Universe," Arcudi says. "But I think this book operates best outside that world. If Superman can come running in to fix everything, what's the point? Although the door is open, I'm not planning *any* DCU crossovers."

Arcudi's original proposal for *Major Bummer* actually called for a world outside the DCU, and carried a title that was also a bit...well...outside. "The original title on the proposal was *Captain Slack-Ass*," he says. "I loved it. DC didn't. I wanted something that was visceral and said 'slacker' right off the bat."

But how do two 30-something creators know just what's "slackage" and what isn't? It ain't easy, according to penciler Mahnke. "John and I are old and decrepit," he says. "We're both in our 30s. I literally go to malls and sit on a bench to sketch kids as they go by to get reference. I also lean on Tom Nguyen, my inker. He's only 20-years-old and a lot closer in age to Lou than I am. I'm always getting his input on what the kids will think."

Everyone involved on *Major Bummer* agrees the book is a collaborative effort. "I get input from Tom, and I throw my own two cents' worth in," says Mahnke. "I'm in charge of visuals, but the main material comes from John."

And while Arcudi may be the idea man, he believes Mahnke to be a crucial part of the process. "This is a project I envisioned back in 1992," he says. "And the whole time, Doug was the only one I had in mind to draw it. He's horribly important to the book, and as long as he's here, I think we've got a future."

That future—for *Major Bummer*, at least—calls for a continuation of the steady diet of zany hijinks. A Nazi dinosaur—named "Tyrannosaurus Reich," no less—wreaks havoc in issue #5. Lou will get fired from his job, take up baby-sitting, and even meet his own ghost by the time the first year's worth of stories are finished. After that? The sky's the limit.

"I envisioned this right from the beginning as a satire, but not a satire with a dead end," Arcudi says. "Doug and I have three years' worth of material planned. If you sit down with us to read this book, we're going to have so much fun." W

Jim McLauchlin thinks it's a real crime that good-hearted children everywhere will never get to own a copy of Captain Slack-Ass *#1.*

BUNCH O' BUMS

Major Bummer writer John Arcudi promises that while 19-year-old Lou Martin is the focus of the book, the superpowered supporting cast will also play a major role. Here's a quick rundown of who they are and what Arcudi's got to say about them:

GECKO

POWER: Sticks to and climbs walls

"He's *way* too into being a superhero. He's very gung-ho and would like to be a team leader, but he just doesn't have the skills. He's the only one who has a codename, and he's really into it. He comes up with codenames for everyone else, but no one will use them."

FRANCIS DUTTON

POWER: Sonic scream

"He *hates* being called Frank. His background's a massage and aroma therapist. He's a real New Age kind of guy, really concerned about spiritual health. Problem is, he takes himself a bit too seriously."

VAL

POWER: Flight

"She's the well-intentioned daughter of an ice cream tycoon, [and] a member of Greenpeace and everything. She'd really like to help people, but she doesn't seem to have the attention span to really get anything accomplished."

LAUREN ISLEY

POWER: Clairvoyance

"She's my favorite, next to Lou, of course. She's this cat lady in her early 60s who's a little nutty. She has the power of clairvoyance, but since she's old and so enamored of the past, it's very difficult for her to see clearly into the future."

NIRA

POWER: Gets big

"She's a black cat who gets big when she gets scared. Trust me, this is important. She's a cat, so I guess she's motivated by fear and food, and that's it." —*JM*

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BAD IS GOOD

THE LATEST TREND IS FOR VILLAINS TO BECOME GOOD GUYS... BUT IS THAT A GOOD THING?

WHERE HAVE ALL THE BAD GUYS GONE?

Not an odd question, considering the recent surge of villains turning away from the dark side. Venom? Nah, he fights bad guys now. Magneto? Nope, he's joined the X-Men (again). The Joker? Well, don't worry, the Joker's still an evildoer—but these days, it seems he's the only one who *stays* that way.

Sure, there are plenty of villains out there to do battle with our heroes, but oftentimes when a truly worthy nemesis pops up, he becomes popular enough for publishers to give him more exposure. Usually this translates into giving the villain his own title, mini-series or inserting him into a popular superhero team—meaning he more or less becomes a good guy...and a "hero" in the sense that fans root that villain on. Sabretooth. Catwoman. Deadpool. Azrael. Deathstroke the Terminator. All these characters started as

BY CRAIG SHUTT

Are villains like Sabretooth (left) and Catwoman "heroes" for the '90s?

VILLIAN TURNED HERO

MAGNETO

A former X-Men foe, Magneto was mindwiped by Professor X after he tore the adamantium out of Wolverine's body. He sustained memory loss and soon joined the X-Men as "Joseph," which has some X-fans moaning that it's too big of a change. "But Magneto has been changing since the very beginning," argues writer Scott Lobdell. "This is just another step in his process. It's a chance to see if the circumstances of his life set him in a different direction from Professor Xavier, or if this is at the core who he is."

Lobdell also wants to examine the notion of how much you can hold a person responsible for crimes when he is no longer the same person and doesn't remember them. "Certainly, Magneto has done things that he must be held accountable for," he agrees. "But does it serve the higher good to put Joseph in jail? The X-Men are confronted with that dilemma and will answer it." ■*CS*

guest-starring, scene-stealing villains. And the list goes on and on.

Turning villains into heroes isn't a new trend by any means, points out Kurt Busiek, writer of *Thunderbolts* which stars villains merely pretending to be heroes. In the Golden Age, for instance, Namor the Sub-Mariner was electrocuted for his crimes (he shrugged it off). Later, Namor would become a hero, star in his own book and join the Avengers. In the Silver Age, Captain America recreated the Avengers in *Avengers* #16 with three former villains: Hawkeye, Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch.

To be sure, starring in a title doesn't make a character a hero—the Hulk, Hitman, Aquaman, Punisher and Lobo have carried their own titles without being overly heroic—even the Joker had his own short-lived book in the mid-1970s. But the shift from out-and-out villain to do-gooder is a different notion—one that history shows is difficult to sustain.

"I don't think there's any one formula for how the shift occurs beyond the fact that the villain has proven so intriguing that fans want to see more of him," says Busiek. He points to Hawkeye as a character who probably was intended as a one-shot villain in *Iron Man* until the art boards came in and then-Marvel-Editor Stan Lee saw Hawkeye's potential was too good to waste. But there seem to be several key elements that push a character into a role where readers demand more face time than they get with occasional villainous appearances.

1) Coolness factor

Venom shot to the top primarily on his coolness, suggests Tom Brevoort, editor on the now-canceled Venom titles. "When he was introduced, he had a great costume and visual style, and he had a very simple concept: He was the evil, anti-Spider-Man. That had a lot of appeal and came across quickly."

2) Fantasy Roles

"Kids feel empowered by characters who are wilder and who can get away with stuff," explains Ralph Macchio, editor on the Spider-Man titles. He points out that many of Marvel's most-popular Silver Age heroes have thrived on being outcasts or misunderstood people with superhuman powers who could fight back against their critics. "Kids can always relate to characters like that."

Adds Joe Kelly, writer on *Deadpool*, "Kids today have a harder time wrapping their brains around the superhero myth of people who are good all the time. When they see someone like Deadpool who *decides* to do the right thing, it seems more plausible."

3) Added Depth

"The longer a villain is around, the more a writer is called on to flesh out who he is," says *Uncanny X-Men* writer Scott Lobdell. "The more you look at them, the more sympathetic they seem because of their background or motivations."

That doesn't mean the villain has to turn cuddly, points out Mark Waid, who wrote the second Deadpool mini-series. "I'd like to think there are ways to develop villainous characters without having to soften their edges."

VILLIAN TURNED HERO

VENOM

With a handshake, Venom said goodbye to his former nemesis Spider-Man and headed to the West Coast, where he became the protector of some underground dwellers. "It was a fairly arbitrary way to go, and it was done solely because the Powers That Be wanted a *Venom* book," admits Tom Brevoort, the book's former editor. "Venom thinks he's a hero, but we don't want the readers to agree. It's a challenge, because these characters can succeed in certain goals, but they can't triumph."

The book has been canceled, Brevoort notes, because reader interest weakened enough for Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras to justify killing it. "The return on the book had declined to the point where any immediate financial reward was overshadowed by Bob's discomfort with the character starring in his own title." ■*CS*

VILLIAN TURNED HERO

SABRETOOTH

Sabretooth came to prominence as the murderous sparring partner of Wolverine. Recently, Sabretooth joined the government team called X-Factor, albeit reluctantly. "When I came on *X-Factor*, I knew the situation presented me with a problem," admits writer Howard Mackie. "I needed to be sure there was a reason for him and Mystique to be there and that they had their own agendas. Initially, I'm afraid I fell into the trap of writing Sabretooth too much as a hero, and it didn't work. But in coming stories, you'll see there's more behind them being there than we've seen so far." ■*CS*

Howard Mackie, former *Venom* writer and director of Sabretooth's reluctant conversion in *X-Factor*, agrees. "You can sympathize with what happened to a bad guy without him becoming a hero or wanting him to win," he says.

Adds Busiek, "Finding Venom's good side is no different than finding Tony Stark's dark side. You're looking into the character to find contradictions to build drama onto."

4) Seeing Their Perspective

Many villains appear less villainous from their own perspective, creators point out. "Nobody would call themselves the Masters of Evil," laughs Peter David, writer on two edgier superhero books, *The Incredible Hulk* and *Aquaman*. "No one sees themselves as 'evil.'"

Magneto, for instance, wants mutants to be respected and encourages them not to put up with hostility and violence from humans—just as Prof. X does. "Magneto is Malcolm X to Prof. X's Martin Luther King," suggests Busiek. "One preaches armed insurrection, the other preaches tolerance. Is one wrong? That's the interesting dramatic question. In some situations, Magneto is flat-out wrong—but in others, he's flat-out right."

5) Less is More

It's often said heroes are only as interesting as the villains they face. Villains come across as active and clever, since they put plans into action. They also tend to have lots of quirks that make them fun to write.

But writers say those villains often are cool only because they are written occasionally, not monthly. "The villains make the hero," agrees Chuck Dixon, former writer on *Catwoman* and *Punisher: War Zone*. "But the hero has to be there every month and keep reader interest. Readers don't want to see most villains all the time, they want to look forward to their return. If I had to write 12 Riddler stories a year, I'd kill myself."

Mackie agrees. "Often, a character who's interesting as a villain isn't that interesting when he's carrying his own book. So those books can't sustain a readership. I think a number of characters, including Punisher and Ghost Rider right now, would work a lot better as occasional villains than as quasi-heroes starring in their own books."

There are ways around the problem of fans rooting for a villainous lead, writers agree. In Catwoman's case, she robs or hurts those clearly more evil than herself. These characters sometimes take the Robin Hood approach of stealing from the rich (even if they keep it themselves), which the audience doesn't terribly mind. Even then, writers stress the need to remind readers these characters are not acceptable role models. Doug Moench says he wrote Lt. McShane into a recurring role in *Catwoman* to remind readers that Catwoman always is being hunted for her crimes.

The real mistake when turning villains into

VILLIAN TURNED HERO

CATWOMAN

"She defies every convention in comics," says former *Catwoman* writer Chuck Dixon. "She's a female who's a villain who has her own comic with strong sales." Adds series Editor Dennis O'Neil, "She's not a nice person, but in some ways she is a role model: She's fiercely independent, she accepts who she is and is proud of it and she's intensely loyal to her friends and to her own code of behavior. She's not a vicious person and doesn't get her jollies from hurting people; that's where I would draw the line on making a character into a hero."

That doesn't mean the creative team condones cat burglary, stresses current *Catwoman* writer Doug Moench. "What she does is still wrong, but it's not so abhorrent you can't go along for the ride." But he admits that sooner or later, he wants to write a story in which she gets caught. "Something like that might have to happen to move the story to the next level. Will she reform or change her approach in some way as a result?" ■*CS*

VILLIAN TURNED HERO

DEADPOOL

The mercenary killer Deadpool is palling around with X-Factor's Siryn and somehow managing not to kill anyone. "We realize it's hard to sustain a villain in the lead," says *Deadpool* writer Joe Kelly. "But we also realize there are expectations after the first few issues that Deadpool is turning into a nice guy. So we're going to switch things around in a little bit." The catalyst is Typhoid Mary, who "sends him back on the dark path."

Deadpool's lighthearted dialogue and the book's open, quasi-cartoony artwork help make it easier to relate to the character, he notes. "Done in a darker style, this book might be unreadable," he says.

But, Kelly points out, "We're running a risk because some hard-core fans don't want him softened at all. We're hoping to enrich him beyond being a one-note psycho, but we can't erase that he's killed people." ■*CS*

heroes, says Busiek, comes when the traditional heroes simply accept the character into the fold. He cites the Punisher, who started out as a Spider-Man villain due to his vigilante-style killing of criminals. Over time, the Punisher has gained acceptance by many of Marvel's heroes. "Spider-Man should not be giving the Punisher a pass just because he has his own logo," Busiek stresses. "I object to the idea that anyone with his own title has to be a buddy. It's a dangerous message to send to kids when the moral paragons tolerate these guys. If nothing else, the Punisher is cooler if he's just that much smarter and able to escape each time."

While some characters commit lesser crimes and might be pardoned, others should be irredeemable, Lobdell argues. "If Jeffrey Dahmer discovered a cure for cancer, is the slate clean? Saving others doesn't redeem anybody in the eyes of those who were killed or their families." Lobdell turned down the chance to revive Elektra, he adds, because he didn't want to write an ongoing series about an assassin. "My personal feeling is that we're in the hero business, and we should be doing comics about the good guys, not about the villains."

Waid agrees. "Too many of those books send the wrong message, saying that we can overlook these actions and that people don't have to be responsible for what they do if they regret doing it. Frankly, if I'd known Deadpool was such a creep when I agreed to write the mini-series, I wouldn't have done it. Somebody who hasn't paid for their crimes presents a problem for me."

Adds Mackie, "I think the question always should be asked, 'Does turning this villain into a hero serve a role that another hero can't perform?' If so, could we create a new hero and have a better character?" If nothing else, he says, the trend reduces the number of cool baddies. "As a writer, I don't think we've got enough good villains as it is. They gave Venom his own book, so they had to create Carnage to make up for it. Where does it all end?"

Some villains certainly lend themselves better to the switch, Busiek notes. "Some are mercenaries, some are megalomaniacs, some are good people who got the wrong breaks," he says. "The villains need to be as varied as the heroes, and that means some will be in dramatic shape to cross over and be heroic sometimes."

The key to sustaining villainous characters as heroes comes in converting the most logical ones, not the most popular regardless of their past performance, creators agree. But even then, Lobdell chortles, the goal is the same as always: keep readers guessing. "I think fans start to relax a little bit and enjoy the ride with some characters," he says. "We never want that to happen. When readers ask us to stop allowing characters to grow, that's when they ought to complain. Because that's when the character stops being interesting." W

Craig Shutt is good to the core. But, y'know, this villain gig sounds like it could be a lotta kicks. And he'd get to fight, like, Rocket Raccoon and Plastic Man.

VILLIAN TURNED HERO

AZRAEL

Azrael filled in as Batman for a short time when Bruce Wayne's spine was broken. Azrael's harsh sense of justice forced Wayne to take his identity back.

"If I'd known he was to become a monthly character, I might have set him up differently," admits Azrael co-creator/writer Dennis O'Neil. "Azrael has been tricky, and I'm not sure I've succeeded completely with him. The problem is that I had to turn a bad guy into a real hero, not just an anti-hero or lead. It's possible to do that, but it's difficult to retain the original characterization. You almost have to change his personality." ■*CS*

Wizard *casts the* Strangers in Paradise *movie!*

Casting Call

By a bunch of *Wizard* staffers

All photos by the Everett Collection, unless otherwise noted.

Y'know, if any comic could do Hollywood justice, it's Terry Moore's *Strangers in Paradise*. Heavy on humor, relationships and real-life problems, this one practically reads like a movie already. Throw in two strong female leads and a love triangle, and you've got an instant hit. And get this—since there's no superheroes in it, special effects wouldn't put the budget through the roof. So what actors would we choose to pull off this romantic comedy/drama? Glad you asked…

KATCHOO CHOOVANSKI

Mira Sorvino ("Romy and Michelle's High School Reunion") not only has the looks, but the perfect personality to play the tough, witty and wild Katchoo.

FRANCINE PETERS

As the overly sensitive, slightly neurotic, insecure co-star, Jennifer Connelly ("Career Opportunities," "The Rocketeer") has the right look to bring out the best and worst in our leading lady.

© Rafy Winterfield/Outline

DAVID PARKER

For David, the sensitive '90s guy who turns Katchoo's world upside down, we chose B.D. Wong. He's shown in "Executive Decision" that he can be tough and caring at the same time.

© Deborah Feingold/Outline

MARGIE McCOY

Christina Applegate would barely have to change her bubbly personality as Kelly from "Married...with Children" to play Margie, the sexy next-door neighbor. But she wouldn't have to act as dumb.

FREDDIE FEMURS

As for Francine's scummy and sexist ex-boyfriend, Joey Slotnick should be able to handle the role with no sweat. He displayed similar traits in "The Single Guy."

RACHEL HAMPTON

Lea Thompson ("Caroline in the City") has all the right moves to play Francine's sexy and manipulative boss.

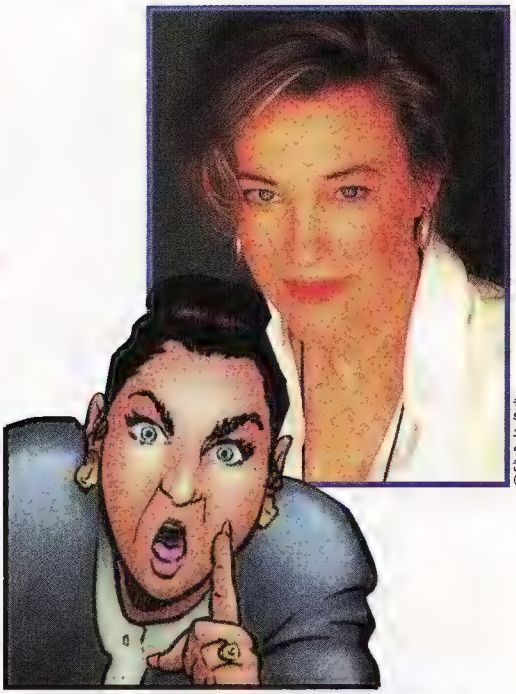
CHUCK JANSON

Playing a low-key, relatively nice guy is nothing new for Malcolm Gets ("Caroline in the City"). So he'd be excellent as Francine's other ex-boyfriend.

© Alan Levenson/Outline

TAMBI BAKER

Mrs. Parker's right-hand man...er, *woman* needs to be a real tough cookie. And no one, we mean no one, exudes toughness more than Zap from "American Gladiators."



© Edie Baskin/Outline

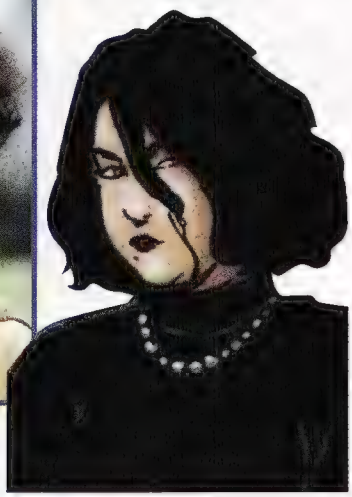
MS. OLIVIA FEINSTEIN

Bitchy. Bossy. Loud. That's our Ms. Feinstein. Sounds like the perfect role for the hot-tempered Catherine O'Hara from "Home Alone" and "Beetlejuice."

MRS. DARCY PARKER

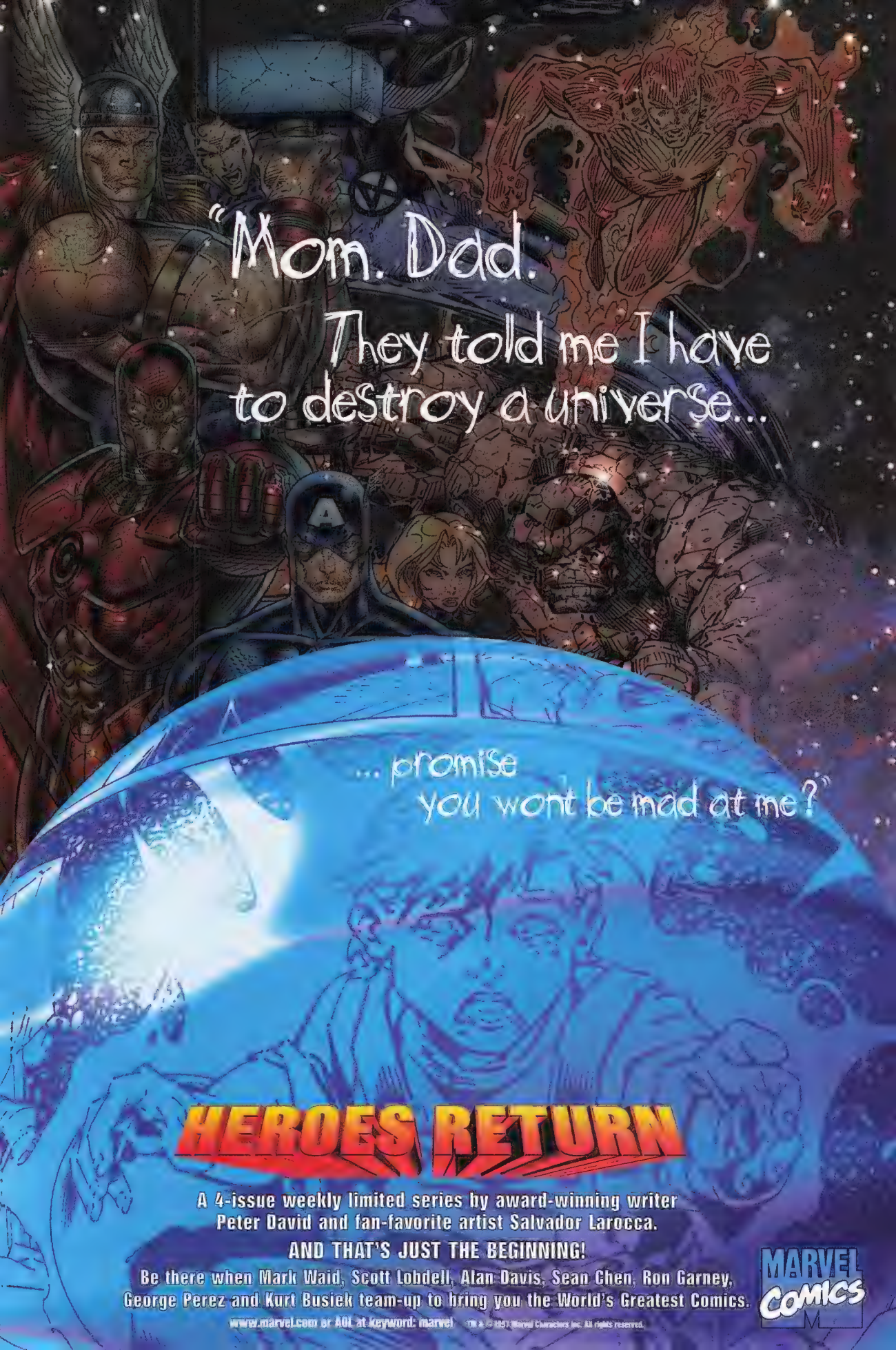
Darcy Parker, the lethal lady from Katchoo's hidden past, is tough and mysterious, two things Joan Chen ("Judge Dredd," "Twin Peaks") has proven she can be.

© Russell Wong/Outline



DETECTIVE MIKE WALSH

Rounding out our flick is the hard-boiled Detective Walsh. Ruben Blades, through roles in "The Super" and "Color of Night," has clearly shown us he can be a savvy, street-smart type. W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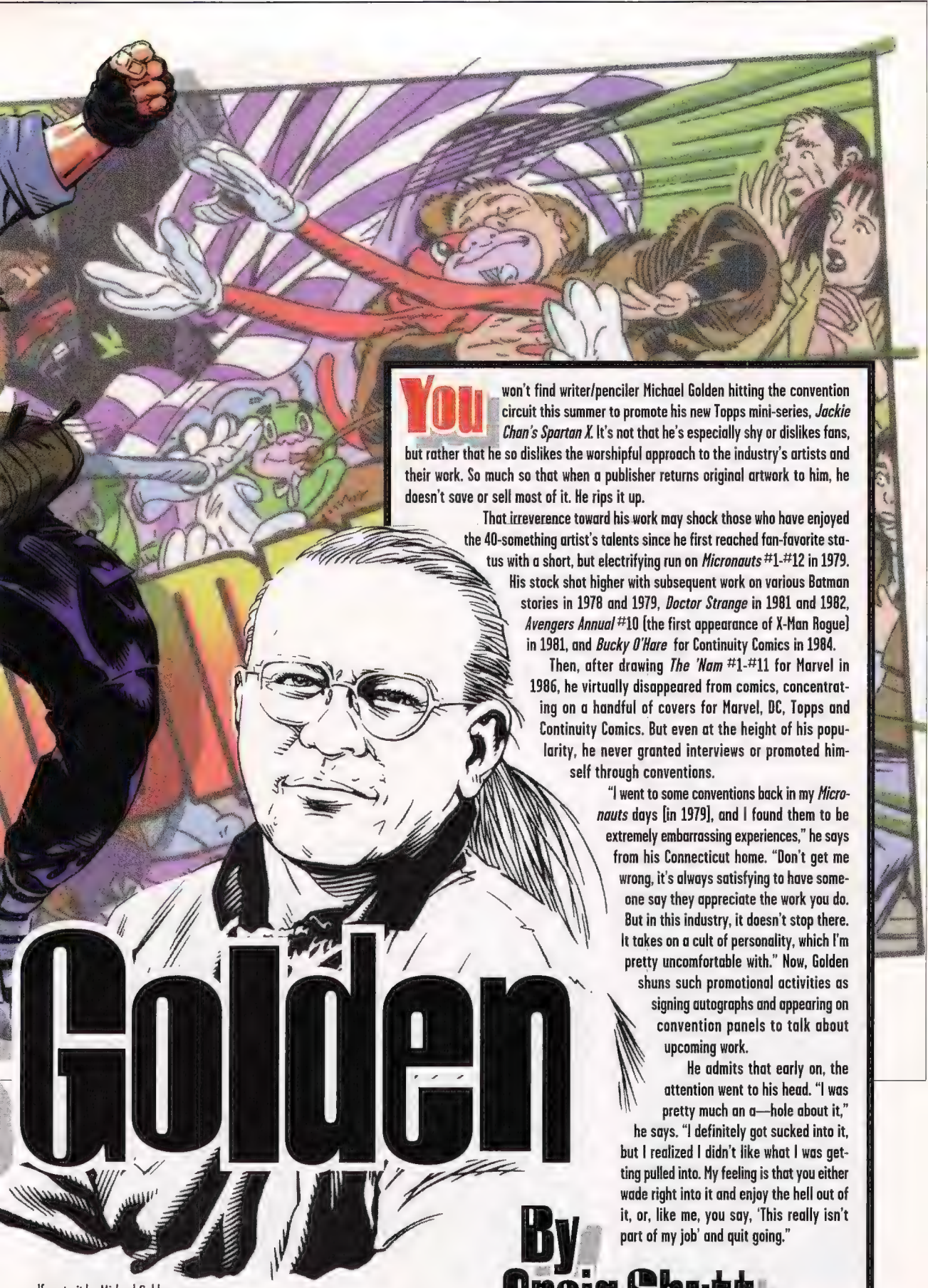
Silence Is

ARTIST AND WRITER MICHAEL GOLDEN ENDS AN 18-YEAR SILENCE TO REVEAL WHY HE DISAPPEARED FROM COMICS—AND HOW 'JACKIE CHAN'S SPARTAN X' LURED HIM BACK



Golden

By Craig Shutt

You won't find writer/penciler Michael Golden hitting the convention circuit this summer to promote his new Topps mini-series, *Jackie Chan's Spartan X*. It's not that he's especially shy or dislikes fans, but rather that he so dislikes the worshipful approach to the industry's artists and their work. So much so that when a publisher returns original artwork to him, he doesn't save or sell most of it. He rips it up.

That irreverence toward his work may shock those who have enjoyed the 40-something artist's talents since he first reached fan-favorite status with a short, but electrifying run on *Micronauts* #1-#12 in 1979. His stock shot higher with subsequent work on various Batman stories in 1978 and 1979, *Doctor Strange* in 1981 and 1982, *Avengers Annual* #10 (the first appearance of X-Man Rogue) in 1981, and *Bucky O'Hare* for Continuity Comics in 1984.

Then, after drawing *The 'Nam* #1-#11 for Marvel in 1986, he virtually disappeared from comics, concentrating on a handful of covers for Marvel, DC, Topps and Continuity Comics. But even at the height of his popularity, he never granted interviews or promoted himself through conventions.

"I went to some conventions back in my *Micronauts* days [in 1979], and I found them to be extremely embarrassing experiences," he says from his Connecticut home. "Don't get me wrong, it's always satisfying to have someone say they appreciate the work you do. But in this industry, it doesn't stop there. It takes on a cult of personality, which I'm pretty uncomfortable with." Now, Golden shuns such promotional activities as signing autographs and appearing on convention panels to talk about upcoming work.

He admits that early on, the attention went to his head. "I was pretty much an a—hole about it," he says. "I definitely got sucked into it, but I realized I didn't like what I was getting pulled into. My feeling is that you either wade right into it and enjoy the hell out of it, or, like me, you say, 'This really isn't part of my job' and quit going."

self-portrait by Michael Golden

BUT DON'T GET HIM WRONG: Golden's not a recluse or snobby *artiste*. He's not unwilling to talk about his work or the comics industry. Just himself. An intensely private person, he believes his work should speak for itself. His discomfort for the personality-focused aspects of comics is evident in his outlook on interviews. He's granted only one other interview in his career, to a small St. Louis-based fanzine (coincidentally called *Whizzard*) in 1979. "I read it, and I sounded very arrogant and egocentric, and I didn't like it," he explains. He also declined to provide a photo or allow one to be shot for this article. "I freely admit the only reason I'm doing this," he laughs, "is because Reneé [Witterstaetter, his *Jackie Chan* editor] was quite emphatic that it would help the project."

Golden, not surprisingly, declines to say where and when he was born, beyond that it was "out on the High Plains" of the western Midwest more than 40 years ago. A self-taught artist, he didn't run across many comics until junior high school, when he discovered the cinematic storytelling writer/artist Jim Steranko's work on the "Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D." feature in *Strange Tales*, which Golden cites as a major influence. His other influence was Alphonse Mucha, an early 20th century art nouveau artist known for his graphic poster designs.

Writer Larry Hama, who has worked with Golden on *The 'Nam* and *Bucky O'Hare*, understands his mindset. "Anybody in this industry who is any good comes to it with a matched set of ugly luggage," he laughs. "Michael's not interested in promoting himself. He's from the old school, as am I for the most part, where self-promotion was thought to be unseemly. You don't go around telling people how great you are. We're not sales or promotion guys—we do our best job on the story and let it stand on its own."

And Golden's art stands on its own very well, Hama stresses. "In the past 20 years, Michael is probably one of the five most influential artists in the business. Many of today's fan favorites have been incredibly influenced by him." The reason, Hama says, is simple. "Michael doesn't settle; he does exactly what the story calls for and finds a way to get his vision down on paper."

Vital Stats

MICHAEL GOLDEN

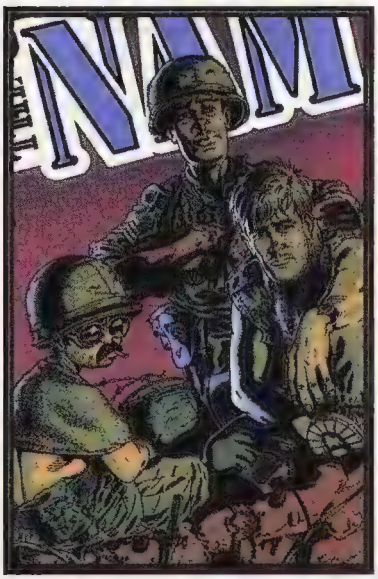
Occupation: Comic book artist and commercial artist
Age: 40-something
Base of Operations: Somewhere in Connecticut
Career Highlights: "Bat-Mite's New York Adventure" in *Detective Comics* #482 (DC Comics, 1978), *Mr. Miracle* #23-25 (DC, 1978), *Micronauts* #1-#12 (Marvel Comics, 1978-79), *Avengers Annual* #10 (Marvel, 1981), *Doctor Strange* #46 and #55 (Marvel, 1981-82), *The 'Nam* #1-#11 (Marvel, 1986-1987), *Bucky O' Hare* (Continuity Comics, throughout the '80s and early '90s), various covers and trading cards for Marvel, DC, Topps and Image.

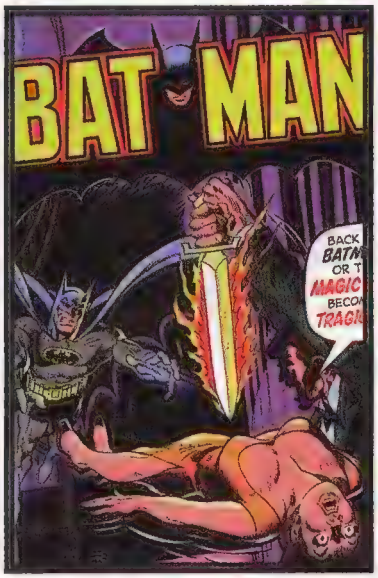
BUT ASK GOLDEN HIMSELF why he's been so influential with a relatively small body of work, and he's hesitant to pat himself on the back. "I can't really analyze what it is about my style that people like," he says. "The sense I get from others is that I tend to infuse the work I do with a certain amount of energy, and people see that energy in the action, expressions, or whatever they're looking for on the page. But I would say that's my job; I'm making it commercially exploitable. I'm paid to figure out what's important and then do it."

That attitude fits snugly with his view of himself as a commercial, for-hire artistic designer, not a comics celebrity who should have fans standing in line for autographs and hanging on every word he utters. "For me, these projects are just jobs," he explains. "They have their moments, like any job does, but it's essentially just a paycheck. That's all I've ever seen it as, except early on when I got sucked into this Being An Artist, cult-of-personality thing. Once I divorced myself from that context of the industry, it was just a job."

In fact, he adds, comics are a less-enjoyable job than the advertising and commercial-design work he's done for the past 10 years, which includes everything from laying out ads and designing in-store merchandising programs for retailers to creating designs for furniture and toys. "I find design work much more satisfying than comics," he explains. "Not only does it pay better, but it's something different each time. Once it's off your board, you kiss it goodbye and it's gone. You don't have to live with it day in and day out."

Even so, he admits, "The adolescent side of me thinks comics work is fun. It's satisfying in a





Michael Golden—whose early work included stints on (from left) *The 'Nam, Doctor Strange* and *Batman*—was called "one of the five most influential artists" of the last 20 years, by writer Larry Hama

"I find design work much more satisfying than comics."

—MICHAEL GOLDEN

Jackie Chan's Spartan X is Golden's return to interior comic work

different context. I enjoy it because I like telling stories. And lately—and I mean that in a historic sense—the comics work I've been attached to has had a fair amount of design work to it," which Golden attributes to the work consisting primarily of cover art.

But even his adolescent side doesn't think much of his original art boards, or the people who broker them to fans. "To me, that black-and-white page of original art exists as a means to an end to be published as a comic book," he explains. "It's only a part of a bigger project and has no intrinsic value. These parasites who sell artwork put a value on it solely so they can make a commission. They have no intrinsic, objective appreciation of the work. It's just a commercial enterprise to them. At that point, I'm not interested. Whenever they call, I have to hang up and go take a shower."

He won't sell it directly to fans, he adds, because he got burned on that for the final time about three years ago. Someone professing to be a major Golden fan contacted him and argued persuasively about appreciating his work and wanting to own it. Golden was offered "an extraordinary amount" of money for some specific pages, so he agreed to sell. "Word got out that I was selling my artwork, and people started coming out of the woodwork, making offers," he relates. "I explained that it was a special circumstance for that one guy. Then I was told that those pages were being sold—at a profit. That's why I'd originally stopped selling art 20 years ago, and I find the business is even worse now."

THUS, YOU WON'T BE BUYING any original art from his new *Jackie Chan* project, a six-part mini-series that began in May (see sidebar). That series also has been responsible in part for his recent low comics profile. The project simmered for five years before finally coming to fruition, during which Golden concentrated on commercial-art projects and a few comics covers as he waited for word to begin drawing. But because his commercial work kept him happy, the delays weren't as bad as they seem, Golden says. Still, it wasn't what he'd had in mind when he agreed to do it. And looking back on it now, he admits that it cost him.

"It was frustrating," he says. "I had my opportunity when the industry was in its heyday five years ago. Bucky O'Hare [a space-faring bunny which Golden co-created with Larry Hama] was a major player in the toy business. And there I was, turning jobs down because I was obligated to this Jackie Chan project."

But why turn down sure money-making offers during the industry's speculator-fueled boom years for something that was dragging on so long? "I was becoming aware of a lot of

Golden's 'X' Man

Michael Golden's latest work—and his only interiors in many years—are on display in Topps' new six-issue *Jackie Chan's: Spartan X* mini-series. It features popular action-movie star Jackie Chan as a globe-trotting hero-for-hire who is looking for "The Arsenal of Heaven,"—five pieces of mystical armor. Each piece contains special powers, which combined, give the wearer nearly god-like powers. Chan races from Paris to Russia to Asia to track down all the pieces, which are owned by the world's five most powerful villains.

The mini-series has been years in the making, beginning with Reneé Witterstaetter in 1992 when she was an editor at Marvel. Golden agreed to pencil it then, but various editorial delays kept it simmering until Witterstaetter took it with her to Topps in 1993. After several more fits and starts, Golden wound up writing the final script over novelist Ric Meyers' plot. The book then was pushed back further by Topps' decision to time its appearance when Chan had high name recognition. Golden finally was able to pencil most of the story in the latter half of 1996, which Armando Gil inked.

"At the time I agreed to pencil the story, I wasn't really trying to be involved in comics in any way, shape, or form, because I was happy with my commercial work," Golden says. "But being a glutton for punishment, I'm always interested in doing work that can push the envelope or that will push my envelope. I thought this would accomplish that, because it sounded challenging and fun. If it had been just a typical kung-fu story, I'd never have gotten involved." ■CS

***Jackie Chan's Spartan X* proves violence is golden**

rumors in the business that I was sort of a guy who would say yes to a project and then never do it," he explains. That reputation, which he labels undeserved, was based on several projects where the circumstances were not under his control, he adds, but declines to elaborate. "I essentially felt obliged to do this for no other reason than to prove those rumors wrong."

He prefers to ink his pencil work, which allows him to pencil very loosely. "Inking is the hard part for me, because that's where I do all the work," he says. He estimates that he can do a fully penciled and inked page in one day, albeit a long, 18-hour one. "Ideally, I'll pencil a page in the morning, set it aside, and then ink it the next day when I'm coming to it fresh."

He admits he's meticulous in providing accurate details on every aspect of his drawings, which takes up time. But he considers himself pretty fast. "Some editors will read this and laugh out loud," he admits. "But what they don't want to understand is that for the kind of work I do—and that's a major qualifier—I'm no slower than anyone else. If I'm given a reasonable amount of time, I can actually beat their deadlines. But in the past 10 years, I've reached the point where the first question out of my mouth when an editor calls is, 'Do you want this done well, or do you just want it done?'"

MOST OF HIS SERIES work was created for only a few editors, including Al Milgrom (*Micronauts*, *Detective Comics*, *Doctor Strange*), Hama (*Mr. Miracle*, *Bucky O'Hare*, *The 'Nam*), and now Witterstaetter. "I've always worked well with Larry [Hama]," Golden says. "We think about comics the exact same way. First and foremost, you've got to tell a story with a beginning, middle and end. That seems basic, but it hasn't been the standard for at least 10 years. And there has to be a natural progression through the story. Beyond that, everything is gravy. Any time I can work with him, I will, and he knows it."

But those chances seem slim, because superheroes continue to have a death grip on the major publishers. "I don't like superheroes," he admits. "The genre's popularity completely eludes me. I've figured out the tricks—that's my job—but I don't understand its appeal."

He prefers fantasy or science-fiction titles, he says. That thinking will play a role in his future plans, which may include self-publishing. "I prefer fantasy stories, but the properties I'm thinking of exploiting aren't fantasy, because fantasy doesn't have much commercial potential," he explains. "People who are into fantasy are really into it, and the rest pay no attention whatsoever. Most of all, I want to be entertaining, but I'm looking at the market as a commercial artist would, not as an artist who has to express himself in a particular way."

He's also talking with artist/publisher Todd McFarlane about doing covers for an as-yet-unannounced Image Comics project, he adds,

"If I could have had a son, Todd McFarlane would have been it."
—MICHAEL GOLDEN

and the two have discussed other Spawn-related projects. "I've always admired what Todd's achieved, because he's done it exactly the way I would have," he says. "He focused on his goal and didn't let anything distract him. I look at him and say, 'If I could have had a son, Todd would have been it.'"

Negotiations on other undisclosed projects, both short and long-term, also are underway, he says, and may pull him away from the self-publishing option. If nothing else, he realizes that being so low profile for the past decade won't help promote his own book. But the advantages make it tempting.

"I understand that I'm one of the privileged few who has the freedom to pick and choose projects," he says. "As a result, I'd really rather not work on a series for a publisher at this point. Comics aren't worth that kind of grief, in a purely day-to-day, pay-the-bills way for a page rate. I don't need it. If I'm going to do it, I want to be responsible only to myself and have no one else's expectations to meet. That will give me the satisfaction of playing with the story the way I want to."

If he publishes his own book, he stresses, he's ready to make the commitment to putting it out regularly, most likely as a quarterly. "Self-publishing implies coming out more often," he agrees. "And 'more often' in this sense means that it won't be 10 years between projects." Even so, he warns, he doesn't plan on scheduling any more interviews. "I did one 20 years ago," he says. "And I probably won't do another one for another 20 years." W

Craig Shutt, who also reports on bad guys going good this month, would love to buy into the cult of personality, but he can't afford the down payment.

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The Dark Kn

By Rob Allstetter

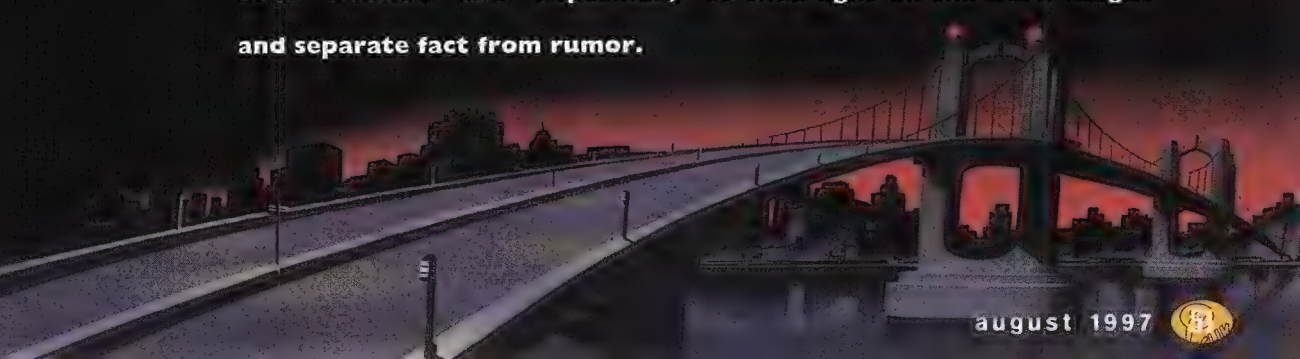
ight Returns

Now on Kids' WB!, the animated 'Batman' is back with a gritty new look, despite bubbly sidekicks

He's still in Gotham City, but Batman has a new home. After five seasons on Fox, the acclaimed "Batman" animated series is shifting to Kids' WB! next fall, under the umbrella of "The New Batman/Superman Adventures." Twenty-four new episodes of "Batman," the first in some three years, are in the works.

Although the series' primary creators remain the same from the previous 85 episodes, the change in networks will be accompanied by changes in the series—changes which have fueled sometimes wild speculation and inaccuracies from the mainstream press.

Wizard went on a fact-finding mission, visiting the Warner Bros. animation offices in Sherman Oaks, Calif. We cornered producers Alan Burnett, Bruce Timm and Paul Dini, who were juggling production on both "Batman" and "Superman," to shed light on the Dark Knight and separate fact from rumor.



RUMOR: The series is getting a lighter tone and look and will be campy like the 1960s TV show.

FACT: The network has mandated the series become lighter and more appealing to kids, but don't bring up the c-word around the producers.

"We are definitely not doing camp," says Burnett, reclining behind his desk.

"We're not camping it up," nods Dini in agreement.

"There is no camp whatsoever," confirms Timm.

Okay, guys, no camp. So, how are they making the series more kid-friendly?

"We are not in any way trying to parallel what [director] Joel Schumacher is doing in the [Batman] movies, but there is a similarity there in that his movies have a very heavy emphasis on the villains and on big set pieces," Dini says, shifting toward the front of the couch in Burnett's office. "We want to get more of an animation feel into the action sequences, so that, rather than Batman having a fight in a warehouse, let's take an element out of a '40s comic and put him in a bizarre setting. It's like what we're doing with 'Superman' with the big action sequences—making everything larger than life."

Out are the mobster, underworld style of stories. In are gaudy supervillains.

"The kids enjoy the fantasy element of the bizarre villains—Joker, Clayface, Catwoman, Scarecrow," Dini says. "So, if we concentrate on stories that deal heavily with them, either a plot they hatch on Gotham, or some unique character quirk within them, that seems to propel a fun story that Batman can get involved with."

The producers also have broadened the kid appeal by teaming Batman with young sidekicks more often. Ironically, though, in making the series lighter, Batman himself is becoming darker, with a grimmer attitude and a look taken from the now-famous *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* series from the mid-1980s—an all-black bat emblem and a pouch belt.

"In order to lighten up the shows and give some depth to the other characters, we've made Batman a contrast to them, so he's even more removed from them than ever," Dini says. "Even though he does work with various sidekicks, he's much more terse and much more given to single-word replies than he has ever been.

"We're always looking for opportunities to cut down his dialogue and add an intensity to what he's saying. Even in the recording sessions, we'll say, 'This line is too long, let's chop it down to two or three words.'"

But Dini stresses the Bat-team doesn't want to make Batman soulless or unlikeable, but rather preserve his element of darkness. Though the rest of the show will lighten, in order to have that contrast, Batman had to remain a dark character. "We don't want him to be a parody of himself," says Dini.

"Lightening the show does not mean we're lightening Batman himself," Dini continues. "He's not a scout leader. He has these sidekicks around and they're part of a team, but they're somewhat wary of him. They keep their distance

The major players: from left: Batman, Robin, Batgirl, Clayface, Mr. Freeze, Joker, Harley Quinn and Poison Ivy

because this guy could go off."

Adds Burnett: "With lighter shows with kid elements, there's the danger of making him Mary Poppins—which we did not want. This is a character even kids are wary of."

Timm says the series' look is getting "streamlined," along with more color. Some characters, including Catwoman and Scarecrow, will look dramatically different; others, like Joker, just have mild changes.

"It's not so drastic that you'll feel like you're watching characters who you don't know who they are," Timm says. "It's not like you're watching Alternate World Batman. It's still within the parameters, but, I think, it's just *better*. It's just a refinement of what it used to be."

RUMOR: Batgirl will be appearing in nearly every new episode.

FACT: Batgirl will appear in *every* new episode.

Timm says Batgirl will show up for three reasons: "Kenner wants to do a line of toys, we're taking advantage of the publicity from her being in 'Batman & Robin' and we just love Batgirl. Who doesn't love Batgirl…except maybe the people at DC Comics?"

This remains the Barbara Gordon version of Batgirl, although Tara Charendoff has replaced Melissa Gilbert as the character's voice.

"She now knows Bruce Wayne's secret identity," says Dini. "It was no big deal fo r her to figure out his identity, so they work together. Barbara Gordon now works with the police department, doing computer work and updating crime files, which she shares with Batman."

RUMOR: There will be a new Robin and Dick Grayson will become Nightwing.

FACT: The new Robin is a 12-year-old version of Tim Drake, as voiced by Matthew Valenica, and Grayson dons the Nightwing identity.

"The Tim Drake origin in the comics as written now didn't work for us with him having a father and living so close to Wayne Manor," Dini says. "It seems to work fine in the comics, but we needed out own little family unit of Batman, Robin, Batgirl and occasionally Nightwing—and Alfred of course.

"We came up with our own origin for him—which we found out had parallels to the Jason Todd character [the second Robin in the comic books, who was killed by the Joker], in that he was a street kid who came into conflict with Two-Face. When we looked at Jason Todd's origin, we were surprised there were a lot of parallels."

But what of the first Robin? After a falling out with Batman and traveling the world for a few years, Dick Grayson returns to Gotham City as his own hero, Nightwing, with a ninja-like appearance. He will be appearing in several episodes.

"Dick Grayson is out of school," Dini says. "He's got a loft that doubles as a headquarters. He doesn't need Bruce's money any more. He's independently wealthy—he's got money from an insurance settlement from the circus and his parents getting killed."

RUMOR: There will be a Batman/Superman team-up.

FACT: Batman and Superman will meet in a three-part episode, with the Joker and Lex Luthor as the villains, but the producers admit it was a struggle teaming them.

"Superman and Batman don't go together," says Burnett. "I talked to somebody at DC and I said, 'How did you guys write all those stories for all those years? We're pulling our hair out trying to come up with a story.' And he said, 'Because all those stories *sucked*.'"

The office erupts in laughter.

"If you think of Batman as goofy guy in a blue cape, then they work," says Timm. "But we're using the archetype—the ultimate Batman, if you will—and we're making him as grim as he ever was. That version of Batman doesn't work with Superman. It really is oil and water; they just don't match."

The producers are confident they've pulled off the difficult team-up, which stretched from an original two-part concept.

"It was not easy to write," Dini says. "We dreaded turning it into an episode of 'Super Friends,' with just a bunch of caped characters sitting around yapping to each other as if they'd known each other all their lives, and they really are just cardboard cutout personalities.

"We wanted to do justice to, really, four characters—Superman and Batman, but also Clark Kent and Bruce Wayne. And bring their characters to conflict on every level. There's a romance involved—not between them, of course—but between Bruce and Lois Lane. There's a definite difference in the way they [Batman and Superman] work. And, right off the bat, Superman has problems with Batman's reputation, and his attitude, and just the fact he's shown up in Metropolis."

Pressed for more plot details, the producers simply grin with a satisfaction they've nailed the pairing.

"There were a couple of things we wanted to do, that just didn't quite fit, but I think it will please fans," Timm says. "Anybody who's wanted to see us team them up over the years is really going to be happy with it. I think they're going to be surprised because we've thrown a few curve balls at them."

Adds Dini: "It's like a wrestling card. The preliminary match is Harley vs. Mercy, then there's Joker vs. Luthor and Superman vs. Batman."

RUMOR: The Bat-team will have less freedom on the WB network, since Warner Bros. owns Batman.

FACT: The producers say they've actually had more freedom with this new round of episodes than they had at Fox.

"For a long time, we wanted to use a character who uses fire as a weapon and Fox said 'no' completely," Dini says. "And now we are doing a Batman called Firefly. We did get some censor notes, but...we're using the character."

"When we were at Fox, after every single storyboard, we would get five single-spaced pages of notes on things we couldn't do," Timm says. "On the WB, we usually get maybe two paragraphs of stuff we can't do.

"At Fox, they were really picky, not just about things you couldn't do, but just in terms of content and story. They had a million opinions about what we should be doing. Nobody bothers us like that at the WB.

"So it's a joy. It's great to be able to work with that kind of freedom."

Rob Allstetter is also being redrawn, but for a more "sassy" look. He's hoping to pass the censors—but doesn't bet on it.

The Darker Knight

After 85 episodes, Bruce Timm wasn't too sure he wanted to work on "Batman" again.

But then, one Friday night, he started thinking about what he would do and sketched out his new-look Batman. Then came a Joker. And Timm knew he wanted in.

"If the animation comes out looking anywhere close to these [new model sheets], it'll be the coolest looking show ever," Timm says.

The producer is in his office, shuffling through the old and new designs. "I think the old ones are horrible now," he says. "They were okay, but the new ones are so much better. It's much zippier."

Comparing the old to the new, Timm offers his insight:

Batman: Definitely Dark Knight and no yellow around the chest insignia. "This is 'Batman: Year One,' with the pouch belt, dingy beige," says Timm. "He's the dark avenger of the night."

Bruce Wayne (left): Wayne will be eschewing the nerdy brown suit for a spiffy black number. "Now, that's a businessman," Timm says.

Robin: Going from a college student to a 12-year-old Robin means big changes, more than just the elimination of green. "It's kind of weird looking, but at the same time real stylized," says Timm.

Nightwing (right): Dick Grayson as a fully adult, on-his-own hero. "He's all black," Timm says. "He looks like a ninja."

Batgirl: "All the girls should love Batgirl," says Timm.

Joker: The Clown Prince of Crime will get a minor touch-up; the orange will be removed from his outfit. "He's a purple and green guy now," Timm says.

Harley Quinn: Again, little change. "Her costume's the same. We just redrew her a little," Timm says.

Mr. Freeze: Mr. Gaunt might be a better description. "He's Nazi Death Man now," says Timm.

Killer Croc: "He looks more like the comics version now," Timm says.

Scarecrow: One of the more radical redesigns. "For the first time, he'll actually be scary," Timm says.

Catwoman: She's clad entirely in black now, with some nasty claws. "We were getting a million wrinkles the old way. We've slimmed everyone down," Timm says.

The Batmobile (left): "It's sleeker. It's blacker," Timm says. "It doesn't even have lights. He drives around at night with no lights—it's the stealth Batmobile." ■ *RA*

At right: A spookier Wayne Manor

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Ever wonder how concepts for a comic series get hatched?

Ever wonder how a series like *Generation X* got off the ground? Or how a character's new direction—like the new look and costume for Superman—comes into being?

According to writer Karl Kesel, the genesis for how a comic concept gets launched is simple: daydreaming.

"It may surprise people, but a lot of ideas can come from what every comic fan has done at one time or another, just sit around and 'assign' yourself a book," Kesel says, who recently helped launch *Superboy and the Ravers* and gave *Daredevil* a more humorous direction. "At one point, I seriously sat down and thought, 'What would I do if I had [to write] *The Inhumans*?' They're a bunch of cool characters that always manage to fall flat. I pulled together a bunch of really great ideas, but it was just really a mental exercise, and never turned into a formal proposal."

Writer Kurt Busiek also uses this method. "The actual origin of *Thunderbolts* came when I used to live in New Jersey and drive to New England to visit my parents," says Busiek, who now writes the title. "To keep myself awake, I'd give myself books to write, and work out about two to three years of continuity. One trip, I assigned myself *Avengers*, and came up with the plan that the Masters of Evil would ultimately conquer them by posing as new heroes and slowly replacing them. At the time, I thought it was a neat idea, and filed it away."

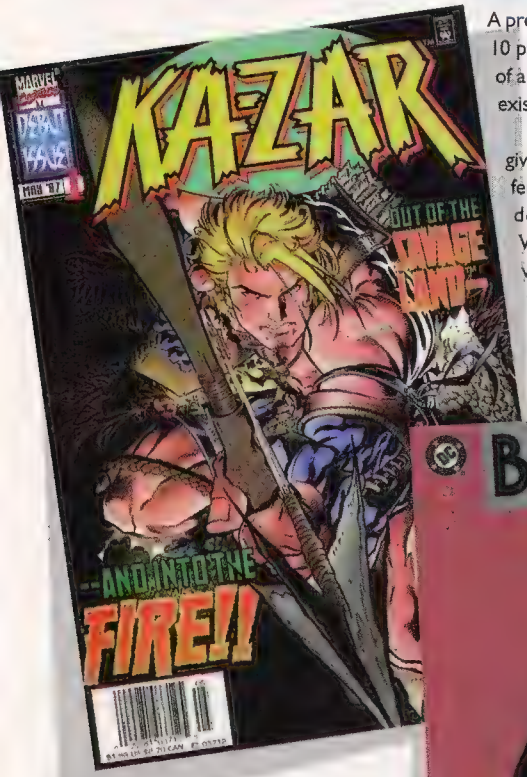
Wizard went to top comic pros and editors to find out how simple daydreaming can follow a path to its ultimate destination—the pages of a comic book series.

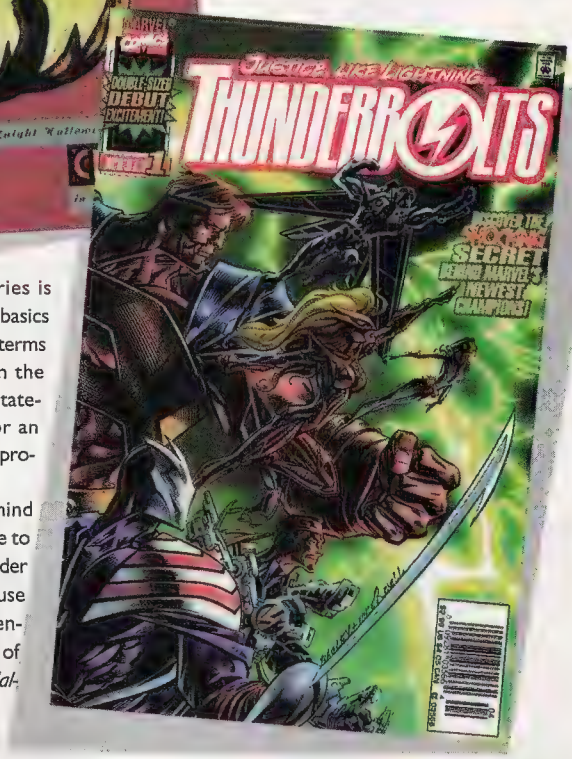
By Matthew Brady

Illustrations by Brian Douglas Ahern

The Pitch

Most series pitches are hurled in the summer. Pros from every corner of the planet end up rubbing elbows at summer conventions, and, more often than not, throw ideas at each other. That's how writer Jeph Loeb was solicited to concoct *Batman: The Long Halloween*. "We were approached by Archie [Goodwin, DC Comics' group editor] at the 1995 San Diego Comic Convention," says Loeb, who collaborates on *Long Halloween* with longtime artistic partner Tim Sale. "He wanted to know if Tim and I wanted to do more Batman, and that was enough to plant the seed that later became *The Long Halloween*."





Series like those shown here hooked editors with a catchy proposal

While a good deal of proposals for new series or mini-series come in "cold" from freelance pros, ideas for many proposals come from within the company itself, such as a *Nightwing*, *Impulse* or *X-Man*. These type of projects usually start as an editor's idea, a logical outgrowth from a successful ongoing series. The editor won't write up the project proposal himself, however. Instead, he'll contact a bunch of creators and solicit proposals from them.

Marvel's editors, planning for the return of their heroes from the "Heroes Reborn" universe, recently began soliciting various outlines for the *Fantastic Four*, *Iron Man*, *Captain America*, and *The Avengers*. "I just wrote up a bunch of ideas about what I'd do if I had to write *Fantastic Four*," Kesel says. "I hope something works out, but I'm not holding my breath."

Once the ideas are crystallized in the creators' minds, it's time to write the proposal.

The Proposal

A proposal is a formal letter that's roughly 10 pages in length and explains the basics of a new series or a new direction for an existing series.

Just what's in a proposal? While any given professional's proposal format differs slightly from everybody else's, they do share some common features. Writer Mark Waid usually starts off with the big picture. "I generally begin with a high concept," says Waid, who's made successful proposals for past series like *Ka-Zar* and *Flash*. "It's just a paragraph about what the series is about. Then I get into the basics of expanding the concept in terms of what I hope to do with the series, kind of a 'mission statement' for the series." (For an excerpt from Waid's *Ka-Zar* proposal, see sidebar.)

Following the idea behind the series, pros say you have to familiarize the proposal's reader with the characters. "Because my background is in screenwriting, I literally did a 'Cast of Characters' in [the] *Long Halloween* proposal," Loeb says. "I explained who each one was, their attitudes at the time of the series, and how they all relate to one another, which is very important. At the end of the list, I cryptically added, 'And any one of them could be the killer called Holiday.' I got plenty of calls asking if Tim [Sale] and I knew who the killer was, which I took as a great sign. Even at the proposal level, we had hooked people on the series."

A "cast list" is not uncommon in proposals, Marvel Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras says. "Along with the list," he says, "a lot of writers are drawing out a character interaction diagram, just like you'd see for a television show proposal, that describes how each character impacts on the life of the others."

Once the concept and cast have been outlined, it's time to let the editorial department in on what's going to happen. "After I've named the characters, I break the series down issue by issue, outlining where the series is headed," Busiek says. "I just rough out what's going to happen in each issue, and leave it at that. I'm in a unique situation because *Thunderbolts* may go many different ways depending on the outcome of 'Heroes Reborn.' If the heroes come back, things will be very different for the team. If the 'Heroes Reborn' contract is renewed, I've got another year or so to play with, so I included three different ways the series could go in the outline."

Loeb adds the proposal must be unique. "I would see proposals that could work just as well with Angel, Beast or Wolverine in the starring role," Loeb says. "The question that is always asked

of proposals is: What makes this story unique for this particular character or characters?"

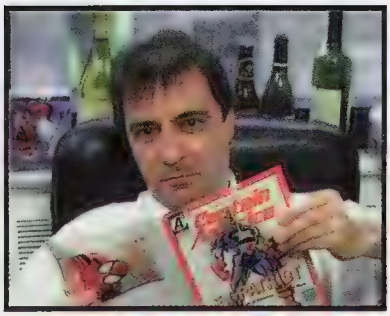
The Jury

Now that the rough idea has been turned into a proposal, it's time to sell it to a sympathetic editor, who will champion the idea through the upper levels of company decision-making.

"The individual editors weed out the decent proposals from all the others, and act as their advocates," says DC Comics Executive Editor Mike Carlin. "From the start, we want the editor to be fully behind the proposal. After all, [if it's a new title] he'll be giving up one-fourth or one-fifth of his month—depending on how many books he already edits—to work on this one. We want him to be sure that the project is worth that time commitment."

Once the editor is sold on a proposal, it is brought to the higher-ups. At DC, this "triumvirate of evil," as Carlin calls it, consists of himself and group editors Goodwin and Dennis O'Neil.

Once it reaches them, the proposal has to pass certain unwritten criteria senior editors acquire after years in the business. Just like a series has to grab the readers' attention, the proposal has to grab the editor's attention. What are they looking for? Two things—innovation and characterization. "The most important thing for me is if the concept contains characters that interest me," Goodwin says. "You can have a wonderful concept for a superpower or a nifty plot twist, but if I come away not caring about the characters, you've got nothing. The character is foremost."

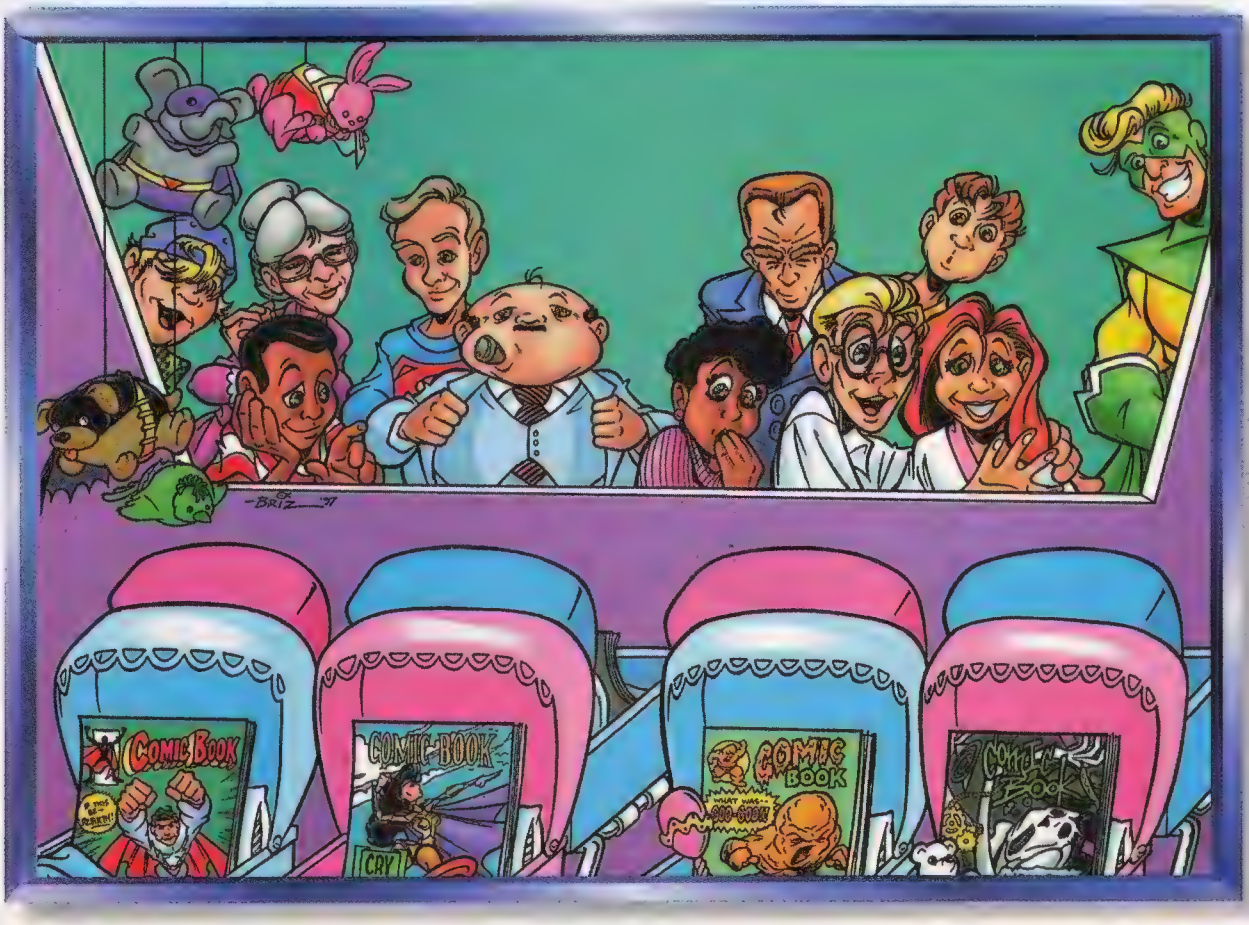


"What I look for is: Does a proposal have heart? Does it have something that will hook the reader month in and month out?"

—Bob Harras, Marvel Editor-in-Chief

O'Neil adds, "There has to be some measure of novelty in it. You would be surprised at how often we see the same idea in the course of a year. The proposal should contain a new take on a character, or a new take on a character's situation, plus there has to be some indication that the writer can do character."

Across town at the Marvel offices, things aren't quite as structured. Proposal ideas eventually make their way to Harras, who has his own set of criteria. "This may sound strange, but what I really look for is: Does a proposal have heart?" Harras says. "Does it have something that will hook the reader month in and month out? Is the cast important to the reader? Are they interesting enough to tune in with every month? Also, I look at who the main adversaries will be as well, because they often help define the leading characters. There's more to it of course, but that's the bulk of what I look at."



At both Marvel and DC, there are levels of approval for new series beyond Harras and Carlin. "Beyond me, there's still Paul [Levitz, DC's publisher] who can say yay or nay," Carlin says. "It doesn't happen everyday, but Paul can stop a series or project we've green-lighted if he has serious reservations about it."

Likewise at Marvel, after Harras' approval, marketing, licensing and other businesslike offices have to sign off on the new project as well. "I usually make the final decision to start up a new book," Harras says. "But if I have doubts about a book, and the editor and team say 'trust us,' I usually will give them the benefit of the doubt and give it a go."

After editorial approval, there are still a few more decisions to be made. "Everything from cover price, to who's going to buy it, to what kind of paper it will be printed on, has to be decided on and approved," Spider-Man Group Editor Ralph Macchio says. "Once every last little thing is decided, you have your book approved to go."

The Go-Ahead

Once the proposal has the golden word "approved" stamped on it, the real work really begins. The good news goes back to the editor and then to the creative team. Now a new book (or even an existing book with a new creative team) has to be written, drawn, inked, lettered and colored. Oh, and somewhere in there, a new title has to be scheduled for release. And for a new direction or new title, the marketing department has to decide what kind of advertising campaign to give the project: a big splash with all the bells and whistles, or a smaller, more reserved push.

And when the creative process is finished and the marketing schemes are executed, the book gets printed, slapped together, stapled and makes its way to a comic book store near you.

Finally, if the fans like the new book or direction and it becomes a solid seller, you've got a success, and everyone can breathe a little easier. However, in today's market, the demand for "sure thing" books is extraordinarily high, meaning the creative team of a book that sells is sought out for another success story.

"It never ends," says Kesel. "Which is a good thing overall, because the industry always needs new ideas and new approaches to old ideas. So there's always going to be a writer out there calling an editor, saying, 'I've got this idea....' " W

Matthew Brady, a frequent contributor to Wizard, *had an idea once. If anyone sees it, please return it to him as soon as possible.*

Anatomy of a Proposal

What *exactly* is in a series proposal? *Wizard* went to successful pitchman Mark Waid for his proposal for Marvel's *Ka-Zar* series. What follows are excerpts of the writer's seven-page proposal.

Ka-Zar, The Ongoing Monthly
Initial Thoughts
Mark Waid
August 20, 1996

The Pitch

Ka-Zar is a series about love gone awry. Kevin Plunder and Shanna O'Hara thought they were united forever in their beliefs and values. They were wrong. Suddenly, they're growing apart as fast as they grew together—and the rift between them endangers not only their destiny, but the fate of their kingdom, the Savage Land.

Lord Kevin Plunder, a.k.a. Ka-Zar—The Man, The Myth

For the longest time, we have assumed Ka-Zar and his wife Shanna, to be kindred spirits. As refugees from society and adopted natives of the Savage Land, they always seemed to be the original back-to-nature couple.

Not quite true.

In fact, what they're only now learning is that the further along in life they get, the less in sync they seem to be. The recent birth of their first child has caused them to reevaluate not only their married relationship but their own individual wants and needs.

Shanna finds herself delving deeper and deeper into the role of New Age Earth Mother Jungle Goddess.

Ka-Zar realizes to his horror that he's actually growing nostalgic for the notion that, in New York, you can order a pizza at two in the morning. And that's the central conflict of the series....

Shanna, The Artist Formerly Known As She-Devil

She's a tougher nut to crack, but we'll work on her. Unlike her husband, Shanna has no reason to look back at her life and wonder if she's made the right choices. She's set. Like most every relationship I've ever been in, she has all the answers while her male partner doesn't even know the questions. Her only failing is that she's not quite intuitive enough to guess the truth behind Ka-Zar's sudden fixation on the outer world (In the first place, she can't relate, so it would never occur to her. In the second place, if she figured it out now, we'd have no story. So there you are.)

Zabu

The four-legged equivalent of Captain America's shield, pure and simple.

Our First Issue

[Ka-Zar's brother] Parnival Plunder's sent an assassin into the Savage Land after Ka-Zar...

...We also catch up with the Ka-Zar family, establish the status quo, and quickly get into the notion of Ka-Zar chafing at the constraints of his adoptive homeland (He's busy teaching baseball to the natives. This makes Shanna insane. Is he nuts? Today it's baseball, tomorrow it's tire factories. Ka-Zar disagrees; what could be more pastoral than the game of baseball, f'r pete's sake?)....

Issues Two and Three

Far more sketchy at this point. More Savage Land adventuring, but all towards deliberately moving the Plunder brothers together as adversaries....

The Rhino

We want to use him somewhere down the line for no better reason than Andy [Kubert, series artist] and I think he's really cool....

Further Villains and Conflicts

Do I have to have EVERYTHING tonight? Still, I'd say this is a pretty good start, isn't it?

Brandon Peterson's
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With grimmer characters and grittier storylines, have the X-Men gotten too dark?

The X-Men (the original team shown above) don't laugh as much as they used to, as mentor Prof. X (opposite) was recently imprisoned

army of darkness

by matthew brady

The X-Men are stuck in a Dark Age. And it doesn't look they're getting out any time soon.

"Every issue is riddled with pain," says *Uncanny X-Men* penciler Joe Madureira. "That's a good way to describe it. The X-Men have gotten very dark in the past few years. Their mission has become hopeless. Even though they are fighting the good fight, it seems like every issue for years now has been very depressing and dark."

And he's not off the mark. Within the past year, X-mentor Professor X became the villain Onslaught, responsible for the "deaths" of major Marvel heroes, X-nemesis Magneto got amnesia and joined the team and X-favorite Wolverine regressed into a more bestial berserker. Now, the X-Men are immersed in the "Zero Tolerance" crossover which will escalate mutant hysteria in the Marvel Universe, and the team will become even more feared and hated than it was before.

ABOVE: (Clockwise from left) The clean-cut original X-Men were Angel, Cyclops, Marvel Girl, Iceman and Beast
RIGHT: The originals (with Prof. X) with their current edgier look

"When the X-Men started, it was kinda campy and fun, maybe even silly," Madureira says. "Now it's just really dark and depressing. I'm not a big fan of this new tone, but that's because I'm more into upbeat stories that have more action without the dark depressing edge to it."

Madureira's not alone in his opinion. In a recent Wizard fan poll, the X-Men garnered a 9 percent write-in vote for the question, "Which character(s) would you like to see completely revamped from scratch?" The biggest complaint of the voters? "They're so dark and grim now," one respondent said of the team. Another added, "Marvel keeps moving farther and farther away from what the X-Men used to be."

And now the team has added darker characters to its roster. There's Maggot, a big, mysterious mutant who has the unusual power of firing off giant, super-charged maggots and Dr. Cecilia Reyes, a victim of "Zero Tolerance." Reyes is an unwilling new team member who believes being a mutant has ruined her life. Marrow, a former villainess who uses sharp bones from her head as weapons, will be hanging around the team, too. With these additions, things look darker than ever for the X-Men.

Even Marvel's Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras concedes the industry's best selling team book may have headed down a dark road. "Have things gotten a little too dark?" Harras asks. "That could be. I actually prefer characters who're a little more innocent and a little more hopeful."

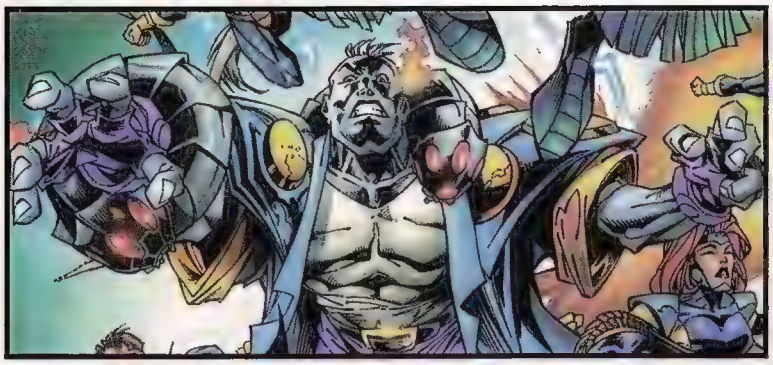
X-Men writer Scott Lobdell disagrees. "I actually find the X-Men quite a bit more optimistic than they have been in years," says Lobdell, who feels the X-Men are constantly changing. "The X-Men have always been about change. Each new permutation of the team from the original five onward has had a different team dynamic. Now, we have a team made up of characters who have come to the X-Men for completely different reasons than the X-Men before them. The book changes as the characters change, and as the dynamics of the group change.

"Just look at Iceman's relationship with his dad, Angel and Psylocke's very loving relationship, along with Scott and Jean's relationship. That gives quite a family feel to the team."

Some of the darker edge the X-Men have, Lobdell explains, comes from the hierarchy of public opinion of supergroups in the Marvel Universe. "Think about the differences between joining the Avengers and joining the X-Men," Lobdell says. "You join the Avengers, and they give you a room on Fifth Avenue, a little Avengers card that lets you get the best seat at the best restaurants, and you know that Tony Stark is going to pay your every bill. If somebody's going to join the X-Men, you don't get all the perks, and you're not going to have a lot of fun. You're going to do it for your own reasons, which you can make clear to your teammates, or keep to yourself."

When the team started in 1963—starring Angel, Beast, Cyclops, Iceman and Marvel Girl—the X-Men were your average, clean-cut group of bright, shiny, all-American kids with superpowers.

These kids went through some rough times, such as the presumed death of



their mentor Professor X, and attacks by government-sanctioned Sentinels, Magneto and others.

Eventually, Professor X returned. Shortly thereafter, the new X-Men—Banshee, Colossus, a returning Cyclops, Nightcrawler, Storm, Sunfire, Thunderbird and Wolverine—appeared in *Giant Size X-Men #1*. But it was Wolverine, a short, Canadian tough guy, who had the most impact. "Wolverine was revolutionary," Harras says. "He was a scrapper, and not really a team player. You were never sure what direction he'd go in a fight. His presence gave an edge to the team."

Wolverine became the team's most popular member and slowly the X-Men began to shift from a squeaky-clean team to a group that was more comfortable operating in the shadows. Wolverine's popularity paved the way for more dark and mysterious heroes to join the team, specifically Gambit and Bishop in the early '90s.

"I think Bishop started the whole dismal stuff," Madureira says. "He's definitely one of the darker characters. I can't remember drawing him smiling. Ever."

Along with the arrivals of Gambit and Bishop, X-Men mainstays were roughed up as well, and given an edgier feel over the past few years. Psylocke, a prim-and-proper Englishwoman was transformed into an Asian assassin who can melt into shadows. Havok, a one-time member, is now a villain. Despite a severe case of amnesia, former X-Men arch-enemy Magneto is now a team member (who calls himself Joseph). Angel's feathered wings were severed and replaced with razor-sharp ones (which, in turn, gave way to new feathered wings). Iceman, once a prankster, is now edgier and wears a spiky ice-form.

Harras admits these radical character changes may go a little farther than planned, and sometimes, as with Angel, need to be revised. "I think when we started supercharging all these guys, and giving Angel death wings, it was maybe the wrong way to go with some of the individual characters," Harras says. "To this end, we're constantly re-thinking all the changes we've made, and even the ones we're thinking about making."

Lobdell looks at the changes differently. "It all comes back to change," Lobdell says. "With Iceman, in the last 12 or so issues we've seen him change from an almost background character to someone who has a very real personality and very real issues with his father. Is he still as happy-go-lucky? No, but in the real world, little brothers grow up. And as for Joseph, unless you're going to lock him up, the best place for him is with the X-Men—it's like that line from 'The Godfather,' 'Keep your friends close, but keep your enemies closer.'"

No "enemy" is closer to the X-Men than the team's father-figure, Professor X. And, as a result of his creation of Onslaught, Lobdell wrote Professor X out of the series and locked him up in a federal penitentiary. Lobdell admits that whenever the good Professor leaves the team, it has big ramifications, some of which have led down some pretty dark roads.

ABOVE: The new member Maggot—whose powers include firing off giant maggots—seems a mismatch for the X-Men
RIGHT: Formerly known as just "Angel," Archangel has actually lightened with the recent return of his feathered wings

LEFT: As Onslaught, Prof. X was responsible for the "deaths" of the Avengers and Fantastic Four

"Every time he's disappeared, it's had a major, major impact on the team," Lobdell says. "He staged his own death in the early days which forced the team to go out on its own, and that was a pretty diffuse time for them." Lobdell cites the work of former X-writer Chris Claremont, who wrote Professor X out of the series for several years—sending him off to outer space. "The team was living in a bunker in Australia, which I personally hold as the grimmest era of the X-Men," says Lobdell, "and it was the point in the series where I just stopped reading the book because things were too depressing for me.

"Are the X-Men the X-Men without Professor Xavier? 1,000 percent no. Do I think that it's problematic that he's currently Bastion's captive? No, because again, it's part of a much bigger picture that's being told."

But is Professor X gone for good? Lobdell remains elusive about a return, pointing out that the X-Men's action during the conflict with Onslaught showed that Xavier had done his job, and trained his students to be ready for their greatest threat in his absence.

"I would never kill him off, because I don't think the team could function without him there in some capacity," Lobdell says. "I don't think anyone will ever write the last Professor X story, because I don't believe there will ever be a last Professor X story."

But when it comes down to it, how long has it been since the X-Men have even felt hopeful about their future? Since the team exists essentially to make things better for mutants and humans, why has the anti-mutant hysteria in the Marvel Universe reached a never-before-seen fever pitch? As many fans point out, without any hope, the X-Men books become real downers to read.

"That is a concern," Harras says. "I admit that if we err any time with the X-Men, we may forget to put the hope in there once in a while, and while we have had some pretty optimistic issues, we could definitely make the hope come out a little clearer."

Many fans also point out the team has lost its underdog feel of earlier days, when the team would go in against all odds, fight the good fight and just barely manage to steal victory from the hands of defeat.

Lobdell does agree the team has lost some of its original charm. "One of the appeals of the original X-Men was when they had to pool their money to rent a car to get to the scene of the crime," Lobdell says. "In the last few years, the frustration for me, and it started before I came on writing, is the fact that the X-Men started out very underdog-ish, and have become very cutting edge.

"Instead of a group of kids who have to pool their money to rent a car, now they show up in the Blackbird with their wrist-held Cerebros to find their friend who's bleeding, but it's okay, because once they get there, they can use Shi'ar technology to save his life. To me, they've gone from underdogs to überdogs. They've become so on top of things that they've become almost frustrating to write."

But Lobdell points out that even with the darker new characters joining the team, the X-Men are showing some hope. "In spite of their motives for joining, I see the members making an active effort to stay together, and in that effort, there's the hope that they can make things better," Lobdell says. "If they didn't have that hope, why stay together at all?"

And as for the X-Men constantly being hunted by their enemies? That's here to stay. "Someone once said to me that the

on the dark side

Here's a rundown of all

prof. x

The X-Men's mentor was responsible for the murderous Onslaught. He is now powerless and incarcerated in a federal prison.

wolverine

The first scrappy tough-guy mutant. His popularity sparked the grim 'n' gritty transformation of the X-Men.

bishop

A soldier from the future enforcing "mutant law"—with lethal force, if necessary.

gambit

Has a yet-unrevealed shady past. Has some sort of connection to X-villain Mr. Sinister.

iceman

The former prankster now has an edgier, albeit more fleshed out, personality, as well as a spikey look.

idea of the X-Men constantly being pursued is ridiculous and unrealistic, and I should have them be accepted in the Marvel Universe," Lobdell says. "That would be like asking me to write about Robin Hood and his merry men moving into the same castle with Prince John and the sheriff, because that forest thing was getting old and depressing. To me, that's part of the appeal of the series; the X-Men are about characters taking control of their own destiny."

However, the cutting-edge feel of the X-Men is going to be the first thing to go. "One of the changes we're about to see implemented by Bastion [in 'Zero Tolerance'] is that he'll strip the X-Men of all their gadgets and goodies," Lobdell reveals. "They won't have the Blackbird, they won't have the teleportation devices, they won't have the Shi'ar Danger Room technology. They'll just have themselves. You'll see in the four-part story that features Reyes and Iceman, the X-Men are literally on the streets of New York. It's a story that couldn't be any more grounded in the here and now—it takes place in a precinct house, a hospital emergency room and a loft in SoHo. It's all about getting them back to their roots and seeing where that takes us."

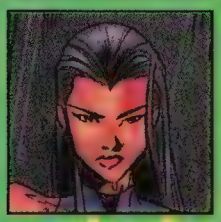
Ultimately, Lobdell feels the fans' reactions to the current "darker" team will pass. Things in the book will change again, leaving some fans loving it, some hating it. It's a frustration Lobdell feels with each new issue. "To bring this entire conversation full circle, what do the fans want?" Lobdell asks. "They want change. What happens when you give them change? It's not the change they wanted, and everybody wants things back the way they were. This sentiment has just reached a fever pitch with the X-Men today that it's gotten kind of silly, but we will want to make as many people happy as we can."

Harras agrees, and predicts even more changes on the horizon. "What we have to do is roll up our sleeves and look at each character individually, and see what can be done with them," Harras says. "Hopefully we have a gut instinct of what works best with these characters, and if that means backing away from what the fans see as 'darker' elements, so be it. If we're wrong, we will definitely address it, because we want this book to be the best it can be. We're fans ourselves."

Matthew Brady, a major fan of the X-Men, doesn't mind the X-Men hanging at his place, 'cept for Wolverine, who thinks it's funny to mark his scent indoors.

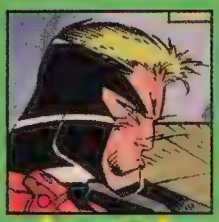
BELOW: Former X-nemesis Magneto (third from left) is now a core team member while Psylocke (center) is a dark ninja-like telepath

the major players in the darkening of the X-Men



psylocke

Was a prim-and-proper English telepath who was transformed into an Asian ninja, who can blend into shadows.



havok

Cyclops' brother and former teammate is now a hardline terrorist.

angel

A former playboy, his feathery wings were severed and replaced by razor-sharp wings. Now he has gone back to his feathered wings.

magneto

The former X-nemesis is now an amnesiac who has joined the team.

maggot

It's been hinted this mysteriously bizarre mutant has sinister ties. His twisted power is to emit charged maggots at his targets.

■ *John B. Lacey*

THE WIZARD Q&A:

The 'A-Team' of Waid and Garney shrug off the sting of being fired and tackle the post-'Heroes Reborn' Captain America

BY MATTHEW SENREICH

"We got fired," Mark Waid recalls matter-of-factly.

Artist Ron Garney nods in agreement, as he sits to the right of his partner Waid. The two have just settled into a 12th floor boardroom of Marvel Comics' Manhattan office, looking surprisingly at ease. How ironic it is that just 12 months earlier the writer/artist team had been unceremoniously dumped by Marvel, being told that despite increased sales and critical acclaim, their efforts on *Captain America* just weren't good enough.

Waid and Garney struggle to make sense of "Heroes Reborn," a year-long experiment that brought in former Marvel superstars Rob Liefeld and Jim Lee to take over *Cap, Avengers, Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man*, and left them in the cold. "I didn't get it," laughs a perplexed Ron Garney. "They hired their competitors to do the job we were already doing well?"

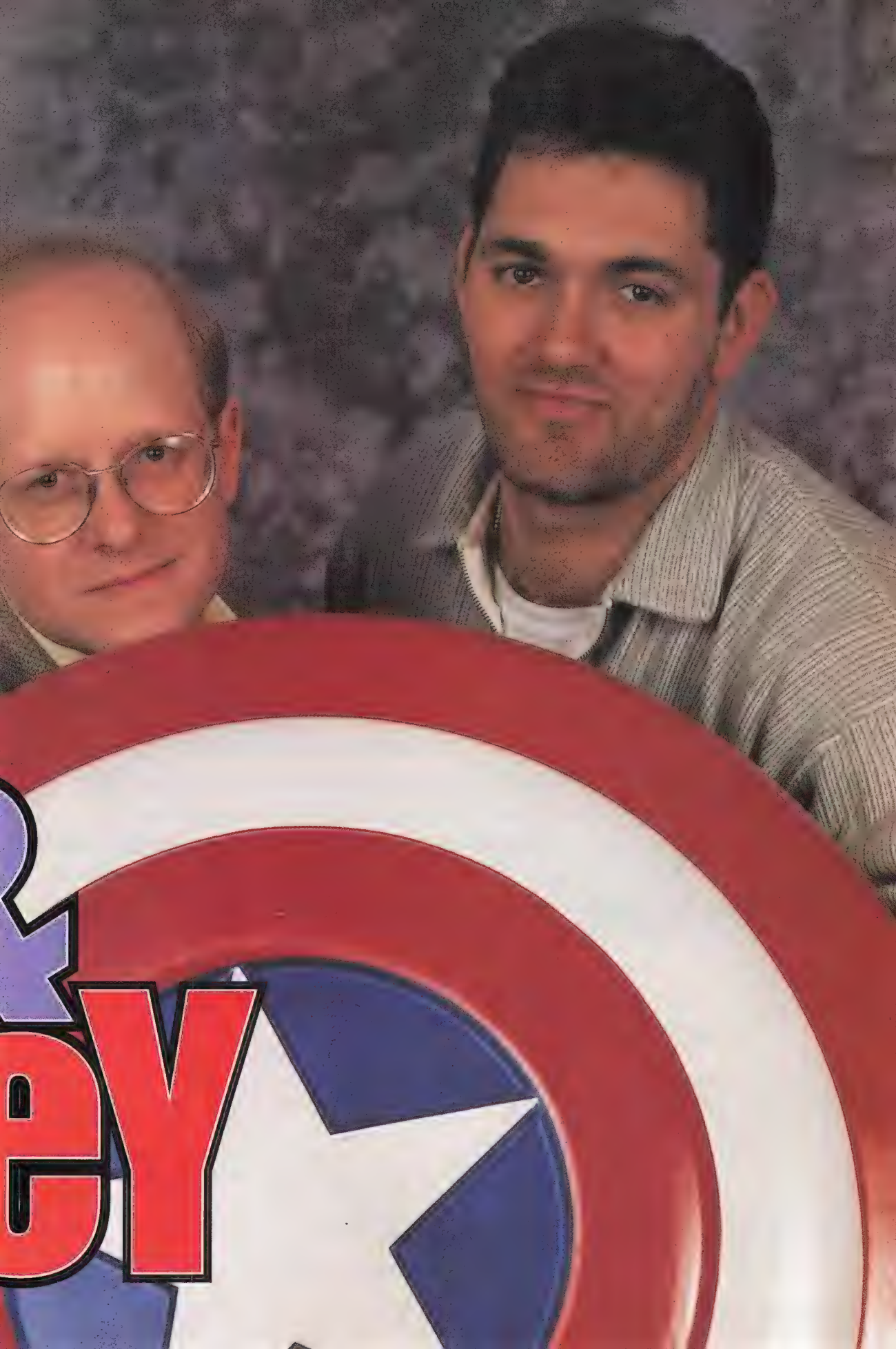
But as the year-long experiment comes to a close, Marvel has extended an olive branch to Waid and Garney, asking them to come back to the book they had helped revive. Both parties have verbal agreements, and only a formal contract stands between them and a triumphant return this fall.

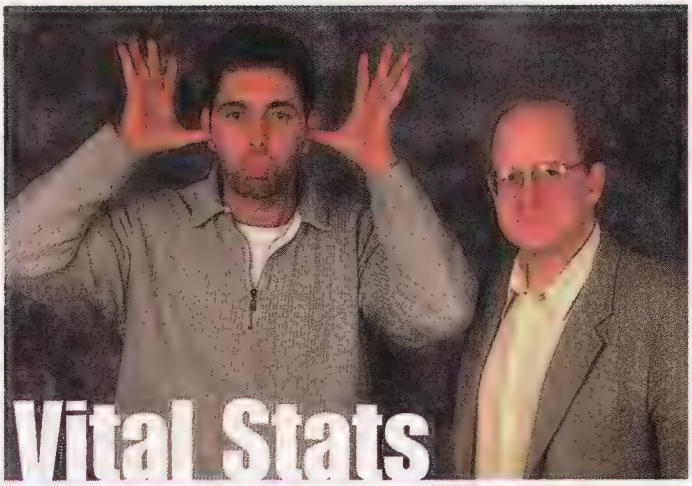
"Why would I want to [return to] *Captain America*?" Waid repeats aloud, pondering the question. "I *want* to do *Captain America*. I'm not going to let business decisions get in the way of my creative pursuits."

With Waid/Garney Part Deux on the horizon, Wizard sat down with the pair to see how they dealt with the firing and how they plan to get *Captain America* back on track.

Mark Waid & Ron Garney

Photos by Paul Schiraldi





Name: Ron Garney (left)
Occupation: Comic artist
Born: October 20, 1962 in Torrington, Conn.
Base of Operations: Somewhere in Connecticut
Current Project: *Silver Surfer*
Personal Career Highlight: *Captain America* #454
Favorite Color—Red, White or Blue? Bluish turquoise

Name: Mark Waid
Occupation: Comic writer
Born: March 21, 1962 in Hueiwton, Ala.
Base of Operations: Fortress of Solitude, Pennsylvania
Current Project: *Flash, Ka-Zar, JLA: Year One, Ash, Painkiller Jane* and starting soon, *Kingdom*
Personal Career Highlight: *Captain America* #448
Favorite Color—Red, White or Blue? Red

WIZARD: How did you feel when "Heroes Reborn" was announced and Marvel took you guys off of *Captain America*?

WAID: I thought it was bogus. I don't want to speak for Ron, but I think we both thought, 'This isn't really happening.'

GARNEY: I thought it was just a silly rumor. I was like, "That's baloney. It will never happen." Then I heard it from a couple of other people and thought maybe I better investigate this whole thing.

So when you found out it was a reality, what happened?

disappointed that we got taken off before we had a chance to finish what we wanted to do. Though it may make business sense, I still have trouble understanding why they did it.

Now, when "Heroes Reborn" was announced, did you want to work on it?

WAID: I want to write *Captain America*. But if I did [write the "Heroes Reborn" *Captain America*], it wouldn't have been "Heroes Reborn" then, would it?

GARNEY: Besides, I don't think I would have done it.

WAID: And we weren't asked. I'm not being vindictive. I just want to get the record straight. Rob

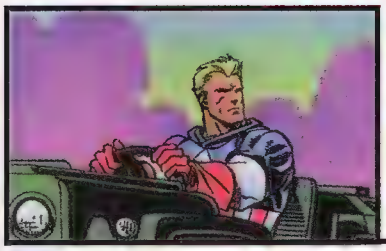
how did you go about getting back on *Captain America*?

GARNEY: It was kind of weird, because us coming back was talked about so much, it feels like we were never not going to be asked.

WAID: I actually got the impression from Marvel that things never [were supposed] to go any other way when the year was up. It was also nice to have people excited about the prospect of us coming back even after a year of not being on the title.

What will be the working arrangement with Marvel to prevent something like

"I am disappointed that we got taken off *Captain America* before we had a chance to finish what we wanted to do." *—Ron Garney*



"Cap's almost refreshing, especially when in comics today, everybody's whining and the guy up the street with the 'S' on his chest doesn't even have the right powers anymore." *—Mark Waid*

WAID: I don't know if anybody from Marvel ever called me and said that I wasn't working on *Captain America* anymore.

GARNEY: It just became known. It wasn't like there was an official announcement to us. We ended up just talking to each other, going, "Can you believe it?"

So when "Heroes Reborn" actually began, what kind of feelings did you have towards Marvel?

WAID: After my girlfriend stopped me from pouring the gasoline on myself, I came to my senses [*Laughs*]. Seriously, though, from a business standpoint, I understand why the decision was made. I don't agree with it, but I understand. Nobody likes to get fired, especially when you are doing a job that everybody seems to like.

GARNEY: I don't want to bad-mouth, but I am

[Liefeld] never asked me to write *Captain America*. Rob did ask me if I would be interested in dialoguing pages already drawn and plotted. I said, "Thank you, but no thanks. Not interested." I keep seeing it in print that Liefeld asked Mark Waid and he said no. That's not what happened.

What did you think of "Heroes Reborn," specifically the take on Captain America?

GARNEY: I guess it achieved what it was supposed to. They did what they could. What more can you say?

WAID: Nobody sets out to do a bad comic book, so I am not going to say the people working on "Heroes Reborn" did bad comics. Everybody tries to do their best. I'm not trying to dodge the question, but honestly, I haven't been following [the "Heroes Reborn" titles].

Now that "Heroes Reborn" is ending,

"Heroes Reborn" from happening to you again? Have you already talked it out amongst yourselves, like how long you are going to work on *Captain America*?

WAID: I can say that I plan to work on it until Scott Lobdell drives me away [*Laughs*]. [EDITOR'S NOTE: As X-Men co-writers, Waid and Lobdell had creative clashes in 1995, leading to Waid leaving the X-Men.]

GARNEY: And I plan to work with Mark for a long time to come.

Where are you guys going to pick up the pieces after the "Heroes Return" story?

WAID: That's actually still in flux. Peter David is doing the return storyline, so we will be coordinating with him and a bit with Kurt [Busiek], who's doing *Avengers*, about where to pick up the story. The one thing we know is [Cap] won't be show-

Cap "always has a plan," says Waid. "He's always right. He's always six steps ahead. That's what makes him cool."

ing up again in a block of ice, because we've done that six times already. My understanding is that Marvel is leaving it up to Ron and I to determine where Cap pops back into the normal Marvel Universe and under what circumstances. We're not sure where that'll be yet. It'd be cool to have Cap reappear in Tokyo on the top of a bullet train. Wherever it is, it probably won't be America. I would love to see how other nations and other cultures perceive Captain America. It is my understanding that we are welcome to have him remember or not remember as much of the "Heroes Reborn" year as we so desire.

So how will "Heroes Reborn" affect Cap?

WAID: If ["Heroes Reborn"] affects Cap in any way, it revolves around the notion that Cap spent like 50 years in ice and had that time taken out of his life. Now he suddenly lost another block of his time. One year, to be exact. This is the second time it happened and he starts thinking maybe it can happen again. It's time for him to start thinking about grooming somebody else who can step in for him, in case it happens again. He doesn't want the world to have to do without a Cap. Without it being egocentric, he knows the world can do without a Steve Rogers, but the things Captain America represents, he knows the world shouldn't be doing without. If we are looking for any connection to "Heroes Reborn," it'll be how it informed Cap's view on his own future and what measures he can take to ensure the future of Captain America.

What other kinds of stories have you been discussing?

GARNEY: We've been looking at what characters would be interesting to use. Mark really wants to use Batroc.

WAID: He can be cool. [*Laughs*] First give him a shave. Think about how ahead of his time he was. He was a Jean-Claude Van Damme, but he was in the 1960s.

GARNEY: We talked about the Kingpin. We talked about Taskmaster and Crossbones. We even discussed the tense relationships between Cap and Hawkeye or Iron Man. We don't necessarily have to go in the villain direction. It's just as interesting to see tension between two heroes as it is to see tension with a villain.

WAID: Ron mentioned something about Iron Man versus Captain America. [There is] the whole notion that Stark Enterprises may have some interest in some third-world country and Cap doesn't like that. Cap feels ideologically different about it. There is no right answer and there is no wrong answer. You have two guys with different ideological views. They're both right and they're both wrong. That way, you accentuate how Cap feels about nationalism versus what Tony Stark may think about.

Are you going to be working closely with

Capping On...

Former (and perhaps future) *Captain America* writer Mark Waid tells us what Cap thinks of a few of his fellow superheroes.

IRON MAN: He's a combination of a soldier and a leader. He has a natural charisma that would make anybody follow him into battle. He's a man whose will is as strong as his suit.

THOR: There is nobody more trustworthy in the Marvel Universe. Thor is a warrior, born and bred. In battle, there is nobody Cap would rather have at his side.

HAWKEYE: He's brash and not the greatest listener in the world, but he has a huge heart. He is somebody that Cap is proud to have had a part in helping to train. Hawkeye's grown up and has exceeded Cap's wildest expectations.

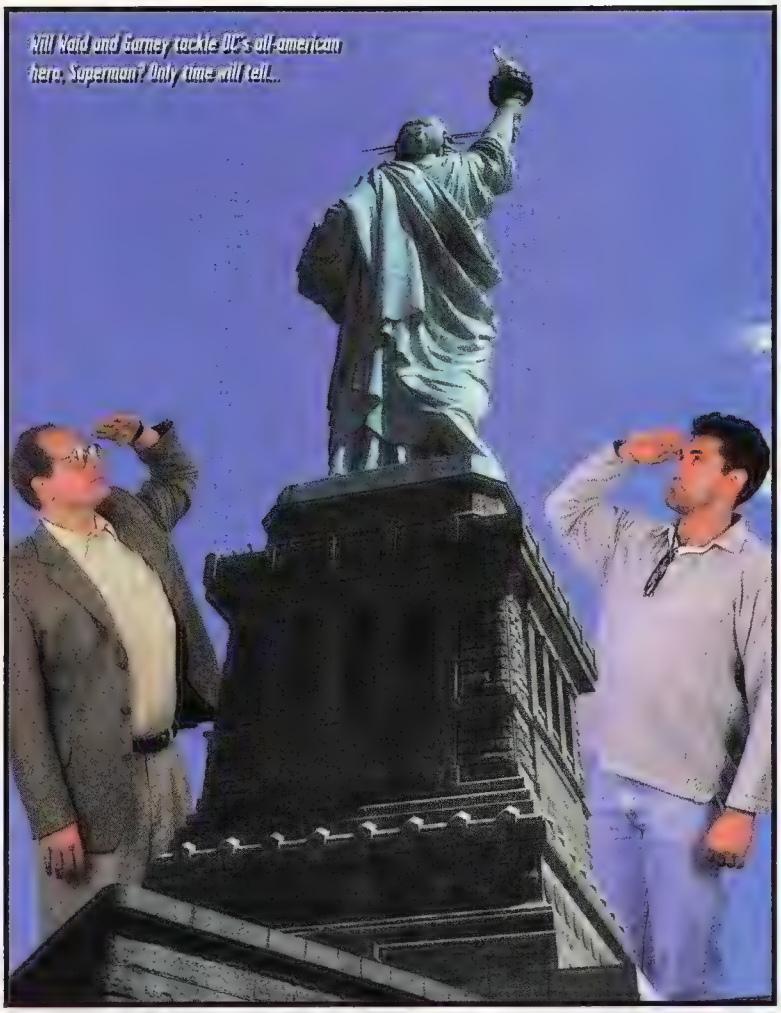
SPIDER-MAN: He's a great kid. Cap doesn't always get his jokes, but he's not about to judge someone who puts his life on the line day in and day out.

MR. FANTASTIC: He has a huge amount of respect for him. He's the smartest man he ever met. He's quiet and thoughtful, and they don't spend as much time together as Cap would like them to.

HULK: He doesn't know what to think of the Hulk. Every time he sees the Hulk he's a different guy.

NAMOR: He never quite knows what to make of him. He's a good man to have on your side, but also the last guy you'd want against you. And you can never really tell if and when he would turn against you.

THING: He's the best poker player that Cap's ever sat at a table with. And he still owes him $20 from the last game. ■ MS


Will Waid and Garney tackle DC's all-american hero, Superman? Only time will tell...

the other speculated "Heroes Return" writers—Kurt Busiek on *Avengers* and *Iron Man*, and Scott Lobdell on *Fantastic Four*?

WAID: The books that would work more closely together are *Avengers*, *Iron Man* and *Captain America*. *FF* is much more of a marketing connection. *FF* will probably be the cheese that stands alone.

Do you have plans with Kurt as to Captain America's role with the Avengers?

WAID: Yes. Everybody also knows that Captain America should be in the Avengers. It shouldn't be any problem.

What kinds of supporting cast members do you think you're going to be throwing in here?

WAID: Faithful Mark Waid readers know I don't need a huge supporting cast.

GARNEY: Captain America is interesting enough without a huge supporting cast. Sometimes I think if you have too many characters, it becomes too convoluted and lost in the mess of all of these other personalities.

WAID: But Sharon [Carter] will definitely be in there. The reason that she works so well with Cap is because she's a complete cynic and he's a complete idealist.

Aside from his idealism, how would you define Captain America?

WAID: He always has a plan. He's always right. He's always six steps ahead. That's what makes him cool. I don't necessarily subscribe to a notion that every character has to be fallible in order to be interesting. In fact, Cap's almost refreshing, especially when in comics today, everybody's whining and things happen where the guy up the street with the "S" on his chest doesn't even have the right powers anymore. Here is a guy [Captain America] who is completely centered and has it all together.

GARNEY: I liken him to Tiger Woods winning the Masters. He was so focused.

WAID: Tiger Woods is a great example. I don't want to catch Tiger Woods alone in his bungalow going, "I don't know if I can handle the pressure."

GARNEY: That takes away from the magic. Captain America would never do that anyway. I don't think his life experience would even allow that mentally. It's never been an option for Cap to question himself.

Since you guys are working with Kurt Busiek, what about Baron Zemo and the Thunderbolts (a.k.a. the Masters of Evil)?

WAID: [*Pauses*] Haven't really thought about that. Ron, make a note. [*Laughs*]

Will the Red Skull return?

WAID: He'll show up again eventually.

Any other big plans for Cap?

GARNEY: I have a story idea about a real 18-year-old World War II hero, Audie Murphy. He held off over 200 German soldiers by himself. I just have the idea of what gets into a guy's head like that. I throw in the possibility that maybe somewhere in that foxhole, he ended up talking to Steve Rogers, and we'd show how the words that Steve was [saying were] enough to motivate him and give him the courage to hold off all those troops.

WAID: We do want to do something in World War II. I've always been fascinated by Captain America six months into the job in World War II. At 19 or 20 years old, Cap was commanding generals, thrust into this position. I don't think he walked out of the super-soldier experiment with his confidence. I think the confidence came with the mask, and he had to adapt into it. That's when you get a chance to write a character who secretly is thinking to himself, "Oh my God, what am I doing here?"

GARNEY: We also toyed around with the idea of seeing his training and some of his early training missions.

WAID: We also talked about doing some Invaders stuff with the [original Human] Torch.

Actually, Kurt [Busiek] and I, years ago, were talking about the Invaders and I came up with this notion of Atlantis being drafted as an Axis power. That's a story we might do. We don't have any definite plans, but we just know that we want to do some stories of Cap back in "Year One" a little down the line. We want to examine the time when he got that brave front on the outside, but he was still just a kid inside.

Outside of Captain America, are there any other projects down the line that you guys would want to work on together?

GARNEY: We actually never talked about it.

WAID: That's not true. We talked about Superman, for God's sake.

GARNEY: Oh, yeah.

WAID: He's a Marvel boy, so he is less convinced about doing it than I am. But I think we should.

Anything else fans should look forward to in *Captain America*?

GARNEY: It's adventure, from one page to the next. It's like one of those things where you go to the movies and you forget how long you're in there for. It doesn't seem like a long time, so you know it's a good movie.

WAID: It's John Wayne directed by John Woo.

Seems the fans really like that approach.

WAID: When we were on the book, we did a good job. We got a lot of critical acclaim. Then Rob did his job. From a purely selfish creative standpoint, if you get fired, you don't want the next guy to make everybody forget about you. I'm thankful for the latter, that no one forgot about us. W

Wizard Staff Writer Matthew Senreich's life story would be more like Joey Lawrence directed by John Waters.

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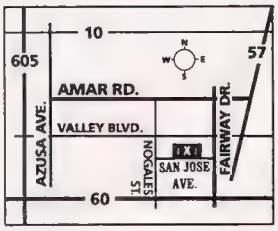

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Event's red-hot hero returns in an all-new mini-series! Superstar penciller **HUMBERTO RAMOS** is the new series artist and we have the only Ramos cover available for this issue! **ONLY** from Cavalcade! Limited to 3500 copies, only $10.

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Chaos Comics Presents:

The Chaos! Fan Club Contest!

Listen up, Chaos! Comics fans! Chaos! Comics' Annual Fiend Awards ceremony is coming up this Halloween and Chaos! wants you to be there! The only catch? Read on...

How to Play

Here's what you gotta do: express your fondness for Chaos! Comics in some wacky, wild and creative way. Paint a Chaos! logo on your car! Shave your favorite shrubbery into a likeness of Evil Ernie! Design a Lady Death earring! We don't care what you do, just be sure to make it safe, legal and fun! When you're done with your masterpiece, take a couple of photos (no Polaroids, por favor) and send them in.

Grand Prize (1): One lucky reader will receive an all-expenses paid trip to the 1997 Chaos! Fiend Awards/Halloween Bash (October 30-31, 1997) at the New Jersey Meadowlands *Chillercon*! That includes flight and hotel accommodations and hanging out with the Chaos! crew all weekend. The grand prize winner will also be a guest of honor and participant in the Fiend Awards ceremony *and* win one Fiend Club starter kit. Whoa!

Runners-Up (100): One hundred runners-up will be enrolled in the Evil Ernie/Lady Death Fiend Club. Their starter kit will include: The Official Fiend Club membership card and number, an exclusive members-only Fiend T-shirt, an exclusive Lady Death cloisonné pin, an *Evil Ernie: Revenge!* poster, a one-year subscription to the quarterly Fiend Club newsletter and more!

Everyone Who Enters: All contest participants will receive one copy of the latest Fiend Club newsletter and information on how to join the coolest comic club on Earth!

This contest is sponsored by Chaos! Comics, true Fiends of Fun.

Fill this bad boy out, attach to your photos, put it all in an envelope and send it to: Chaos! Fan Club Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is August 29, 1997.

Law & Chaos

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Chaos! Comics, their immediate families or anybody who thinks happy thoughts. Don't make us kill you. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card and attach to your photo entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Chaos! Fan Club Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Man, that Lady Death's got big...sales. All entries must be received at contest headquarters by August 29, 1997. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on originality and creativity from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on September 15, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after September 15, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Chaos! Fan Club Contest Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Chaos! Fan Club Entry Form

DEADLINE IS AUGUST 29, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____

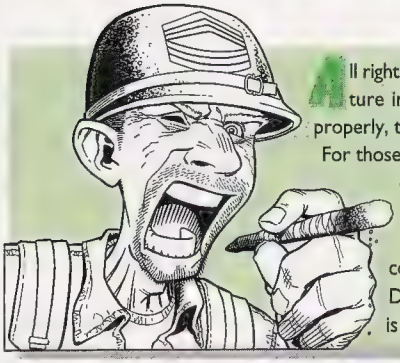
State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Basic Training

this month's host: Arthur Adams

Texture: Friend or Foe?



All right, you useless maggots, listen up! Today we're going to talk about texture in comic book drawing! Don't get scared yet, ya pansies! If used properly, texture won't hurt ya!

For those of you who don't know me, my name's Arthur Adams, but you can call me Sir! In the last 14 years, I've done a variety of comics, including a handful of X-Men annuals, three issues of *Fantastic Four*, a *Longshot* mini-series and a bunch of other comics. Lately, I've been doing *Monkeyman and O'Brien* for good ol' Dark Horse Comics! Check it out! Now, the reason I'm here today is to talk to you recruits about texture. So move, move, MOVE!

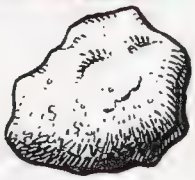
Shape Up

Let's start with something simple: a bunch of oranges. Some of them have been through a lot. And even though the oranges all have different textures, the texture helps to give them shape.

Here's a nice, fresh orange. You might notice I've used tiny, curved lines (more toward the edges, fewer in the middle) to show the orange has depth (thickness) and mass.

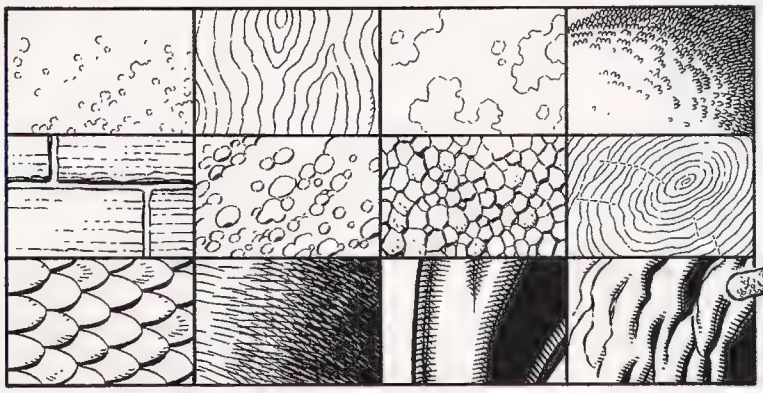
This fruit's been chrome-plated. I've used stylized, curved lines inside the orange's outline. This helps convey a sense of reflectivity without going to the trouble of actually drawing everything around the orange reflected in its surface.

This one's seen better days. I wanted it to look really moldy, so I used short, dashy lines to make it look all nasty and shaggy. Again, I worked with thinner and thicker lines to show this object has mass.



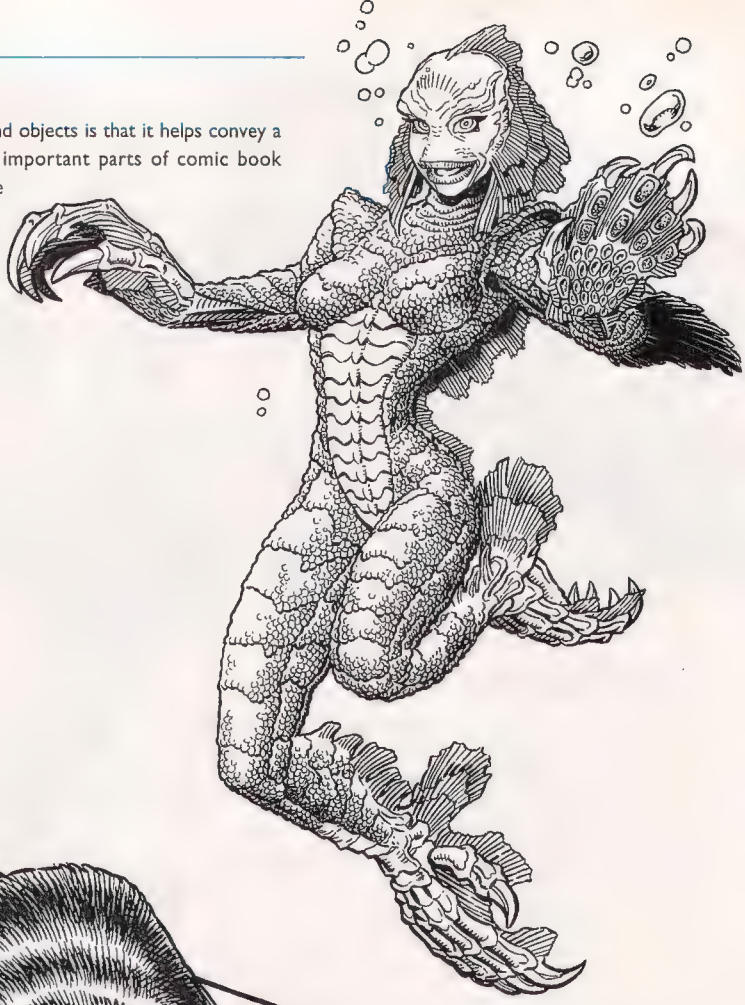
This one is ancient! Mummified! Petrified! Rock hard! You may notice that I used little curve lines and short, dashy strokes. I did this to show it's still an orange, but that it's also hard and dry. Notice the outline isn't as smooth as the first orange, which makes the orange look sort of deflated. Ewwww.

Here are some random textures. Some might be stone or brick, others might be a fingerprint or wood. Could one be a leather-clad forearm? Perhaps some are different skin types: fish, lizard, human, shaggy ape or even a sort of Godzilla skin. You figure 'em out. I'm bitter.



Depth Defining

The reason I like using a lot of texture on characters and objects is that it helps convey a sense of depth, weight and mass. One of the most important parts of comic book storytelling is convincing the reader of the reality of the story. Yes, I know comic books are two-dimensional drawings and are therefore clearly not real. But adding texture to your forms helps the reader suspend his disbelief.



Nature of the Beast

Texture can also help define or at least hint at a character's nature. The relative lack of texture on young Ann O'Brien helps to convey a sense of youth and wholesomeness. Be careful not to put too many lines on her face. You don't want to make Ann look old.

The texture for Monkeyman is a little rougher. I've drawn deep wrinkles on Monkeyman's face to show that he's older than Ann. I'm also trying to convey a sense of maturity and wisdom. And notice how the very simple detail in the eyes looks kind of spooky and otherworldly (At least, I think so.).

While the Shrewmanoid calls for similar textural techniques as Monkeyman, little differences help to show him for the filthy little degenerate that he is! What differences? Well, just look at him! Take note of the little circles and partial circles I drew on him, which just help to make him look dirty. He just looks nasty, don't he?

Monkeyman, O'Brien and the Shrewmanoid ™ & © Arthur Adams 1997

Stone Cold Crazy

The Thing is a good example of a rough, stony texture. Short, choppy dash strokes help to show this. Use fewer and thinner dash strokes towards the areas you want highlighted on your figure, and thicker, and more lines toward your shaded areas.

When the rendering is done properly, it can help give the illusion of weight and mass. This sort of rendering works well on brick and other dry and hard materials. Also, sharp edges help to show hardness.

Crunchy Critters

This fellow with the oddly shaped noggin illustrates another sort of hardness. With this guy, I was going for an organic, chitinous, oily shell quality. Fairly smooth lines on his head help show his smooth, polished nature. Remember to vary your line weights when you do this or else it'll just look wrong. Also, drawing thick black rectangles, like the details on his arms, helps make our monster look more mechanical.

Remember, always try to show a sense of depth, weight and mass. While you only see one side of an object, its opposite side (the one you *can't* see), still exists in the reality of your comic book.

Moist and Squishy

This is Gorhemoth, the monster made of living garbage from *Dark Horse Presents* #118-#119. With him, we strive for a sort of foul, moist, juicy kind of look. To show this, I draw randomly shaped patches to indicate an uneven tone, and then I tried showing that he's moist by highlighting the undersides of his arms. This shows he's slightly reflective of his surroundings, which to me, makes him look kinda moist. Being made of garbage, he could have many textures, but this time I wanted him gooey. Also, adding nice little touches like buzzing insects can help indicate unpleasant odors.

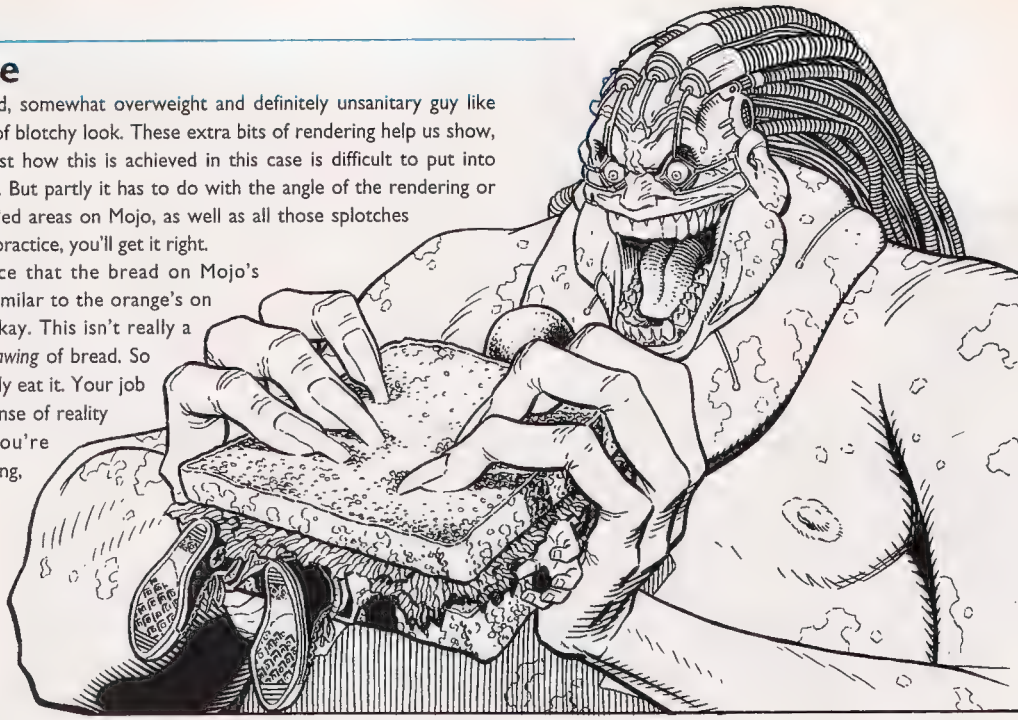
RUN FOR IT SAM!

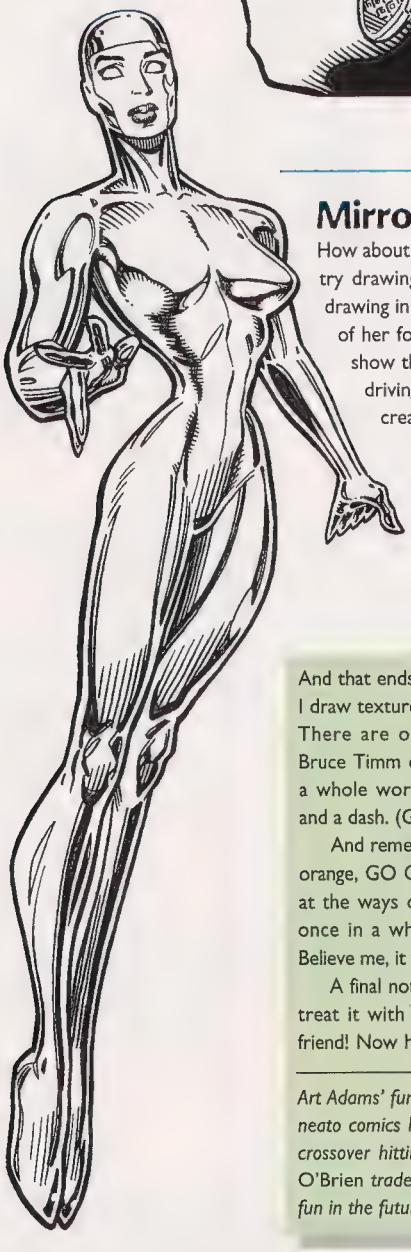
Gorhemoth ™ & © Arthur Adams 1997

Out of Shape

For a nasty, ill-tempered, somewhat overweight and definitely unsanitary guy like Mojo, we go for a kind of blotchy look. These extra bits of rendering help us show, again, mass and bulk. Just how this is achieved in this case is difficult to put into words (for me, anyway). But partly it has to do with the angle of the rendering or feathering near the shaded areas on Mojo, as well as all those splotches drawn on his body. Just practice, you'll get it right.

You may also notice that the bread on Mojo's sandwich has texture similar to the orange's on the first page. That's okay. This isn't really a piece of bread, it's a *drawing* of bread. So you don't have to actually eat it. Your job is simply to convey a sense of reality to whatever object you're illustrating. This is drawing, not photography.





Mirror, Mirror

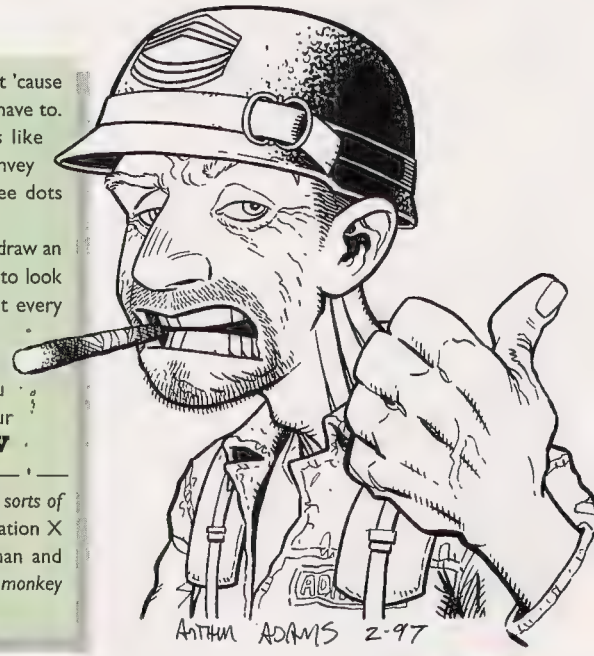
How about drawing a super-reflective, ultra-smooth character (or object) like Void? You could try drawing all the objects near her reflected on her surface, but you want to finish this drawing in your lifetime, right? Try drawing lines of various thicknesses parallel to the outlines of her form. Also suggest some highlights or gleams in various areas. All these things help show that our character is highly reflective *without* actually drawing all the reflections and driving ourselves insane. Remember, you're just trying to give the illusion of reality, not create reality itself. Believe me, you can't. I've tried.

And that ends today's drill. Remember, just 'cause I draw texture this way doesn't mean *you* have to. There are other terrific comics artists like Bruce Timm or Mike Mignola who can convey a whole world of textures with just three dots and a dash. (God, I hate those guys!)

And remember this: When it's time to draw an orange, GO GET AN ORANGE! It's okay to look at the ways other artists draw things, but every once in a while, look at real life things! Believe me, it will only help your drawing.

A final note, before I go: As long as you treat it with respect, texture *can* be your friend! Now hit the road, ya wusses! **W**

Art Adams' funky textures can be seen on all sorts of neato comics like WildStorm's Gen[13]/Generation X *crossover hitting stores in July, a* Monkeyman and O'Brien *trade paperback in June and more monkey fun in the future!*



It's time to come in...
...out of the DARK!

DARKCHYLDE 1/2

If you're down with the comic book scene, then you already know one thing...Ariel is the most haunted girl in town! And we're not talking mermaids here, either! No, we mean Darkchylde, the title character from Randy Queen's hit series from Image!

And if you're anything like the comic book junkie we think you are, then we know you're craving even more *Darkchylde*! Which is exactly why Wizard Press and Randy Queen have joined forces to present *Darkchylde* #1/2, an all-new Darkchylde story for the low price of just **three measly clams!** Plus, *Darkchylde* #1/2 features these devilish goodies:

- A brand-new Randy Queen **cover** with interior artwork by Queen and hot new talent, Kaucha!
- The **introduction** of an all-new supporting character, Sister Asylum—a babe so bad, she's sure to wreak havoc in Darkchylde's life!
- A **link** between series—this 1/2 edition serves as a bridge between Darkchylde's current series and her future one!
- Behind-the-scenes **sketchbook** material! See what goes into the making of this wicked title!
- And the most fiendish part of all—this is a *Darkchylde* comic you can't get anywhere else! Understand, people? This **exclusive** book is available through this *Wizard* offer only!

Don't make Darkchylde angry! Order your copy today! (Because you know what happens when she gets angry!)

the Dark Side of the Law:

No reproductions of this coupon will be accepted. This coupon must be sent in the accompanying envelope: one coupon per comic. You may put additional coupons in the same envelope. You've been a naughty chylde! Remit by check or money order only. Canadian orders remit $4.00, other foreign orders remit $6.00. All payment must be in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank. Queen is King. Make all checks payable to Wizard Press. Offer good only while supply lasts. Please allow 8 to twelve weeks for delivery. Changes of address will not be forwarded unless Wizard Press is notified in writing by September 16, 1997. THIS OFFER EXPIRES SEPTEMBER 16, 1997.

image

THIS OFFER EXPIRES SEPTEMBER 16, 1997.

JUNK DRAWER

By David Borak and the *Wizard* Staff

Little bits of everything in the world of comic-related merchandise

Joker Statue

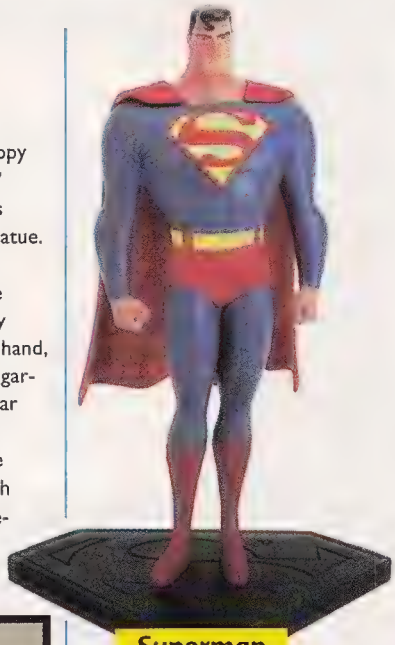
JOKER, A MODEL CRIMINAL

This July, be on the lookout for a disturbingly beautiful vinyl model kit of Batman's arch-villain, the Joker! Made by Horizon Hobbies, this model features the Joker sitting upon a throne with a long-barreled pistol as his scepter. The kit is 1/8 scale and'll cost ya $45. You're gonna have to put it together and paint it yourself, though. (Hey, that's why they call it a "kit.") Look for it in comic book, toy and specialty stores.

DESTINY AWAITS

Sandman fans will be happy to know that Morpheus' older brother Destiny is finally getting his own statue. Based on sketches from Michael Zulli, this statue shows the Endless family member with a book in hand, walking the paths of his garden. Mounted on a poplar wood base, the statue come with an eight-page mini-book complete with sketches and behind-the-scenes stuff. *Destiny*, limited to 5,500 pieces, will retail for $195. Look for it in comic and specialty stores this September.

Destiny Statue



Superman Maquette

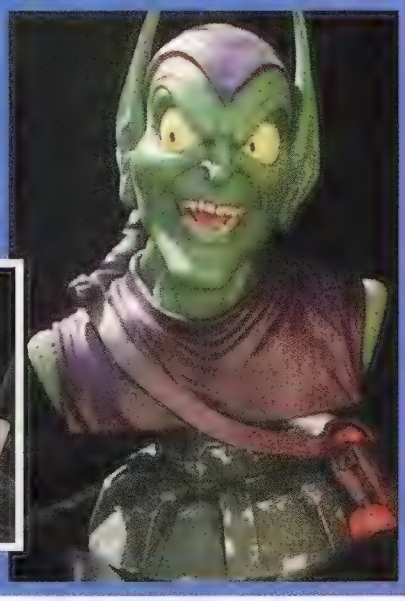
SUPER MAQUETTE

Forget about Superman, the Man of Electricity. Warner Bros. Studio Stores are presenting a maquette of Superman, the Man of Steel. Capturing the hero in his original red-and-blue costume, the maquette features Supes (with his trademark curl) resting on an "S"-shaped base. The Superman maquette, limited to 2,500 copies, retails for $150 and is available at your friendly neighborhood Warner Bros. Studio Store. For the store nearest you, call 1-800-4WARNER.

Product of the Month

THE GOBLIN'S BUSTIN' OUT!

Rarely has there come a comic book villain who looks as evil as the Green Goblin. Sculptor Greg Aronowitz has beautifully captured the Goblin's evil streak better than Peter Parker's trusty camera ever could, in this cold-cast porcelain bust. At a menacing 9.5 inches, the fully painted bust comes packed in a full-color collector's box designed by Hollywood Film Designer Tim Flattery. The Green Goblin bust from Legends in 3 Dimensions is limited to just 2,500 pieces with a suggested retail price of $159. Available in July, the Green Goblin bust is the first in a series of "good vs. bad" busts featuring Marvel's most famous heroes and villains.



A CHILLING MODEL

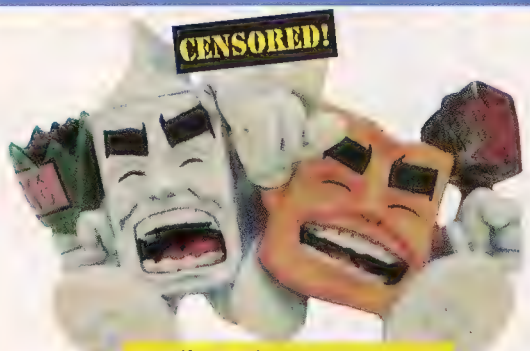
This summer, Batman fans will see Arnold Schwarzenegger portray the evil Mr. Freeze in the latest Bat-flick. But this July, you can join in the icy celebration with Horizon Hobbies' Mr. Freeze 1/8 scale solid model kit, based on the character from his most recent comic book incarnation (*not* from the lame-looking movie). Suited up in his life-sustaining armor with a clear, bell-jar helmet, the Mr. Freeze kit sells for $125 and is available at most comic book, toy and specialty stores. And yes, you've gotta paint it and put it together yourself.

I SPY SPY VS. SPY

Whether they're blowing each other up, getting stabbed, fried or dismembered, one thing's for sure—*Mad Magazine*'s "Spy vs. Spy" guys are the coolest spies ever. Now, Don Post Studios has taken the dueling duo and made their likenesses into latex masks. Sold separately, you can purchase a black or white high-quality latex spy mask complete with foam hat for $50. Look for them now in costume stores everywhere or call Don Post Studies at 1-800-874-4087 for the store nearest you.

MAGNET MAYHEM

Those dairy products gone bad are at it again. This time, Milk and Cheese creator Evan Dorkin, along with sculptor Randy Bowen, have joined forces to put out the Milk and Cheese magnet. This hysterical fridge decoration, available in August, comes in a nifty box designed by Dorkin himself and retails for $12. Ask your local retailer for details or write to Bowen Designs directly at P.O. Box 220223, Milwaukie, Oregon 97269.



Milk & Cheese Magnet

COTTON JUSTICE

To celebrate DC Comics' JLA month and show your support for the team, get yourself the JLA cotton T-shirt. This spiffy shirt features all seven members (Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Flash, Green Lantern, Aquaman and the Martian Manhunter) in an illustration by *JLA* artists Howard Porter and John Dell, from a design by Walter Simonson. Available from DC Comics in large and extra-large sizes for $15.95, look for it in comic and specialty shops everywhere this July.

UNFRAMED X-MEN

If you're looking for a cool limited-edition piece of artwork to hang on your wall, WildStorm Fine Arts presents an Iris Print of those Uncanny X-Men by none other than artist Adam Hughes! The print features all-new, original artwork and is limited to just 300 signed-and-numbered copies. Printed on high-quality Arches watercolor paper, these mutants are suitable for framing and will cost ya $150.

A HULKING STATUE

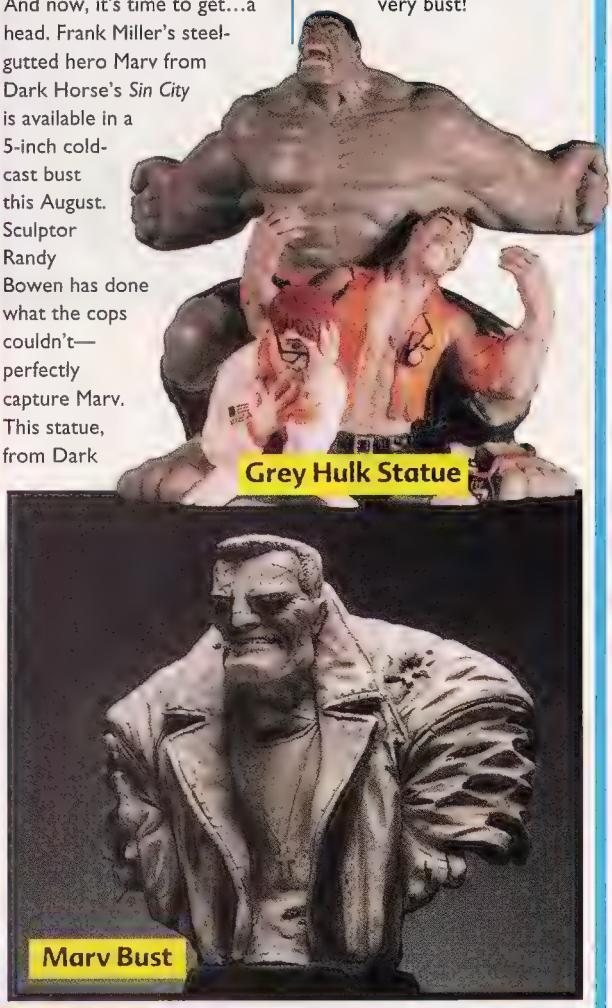
If you're a big hulking... er, Hulk fan, you'll definitely wanna check out Applause Inc.'s Special Edition Grey Hulk Statue which features Bruce Banner transforming

JLA T-shirt

into the grey Hulk! Limited to only 225 pieces, this statue comes signed by Stan "The Man" Lee for $250. Look for it in comic book and specialty shops this July.

HEY, MARV— IT'S A BUST!

He's been shot, bitten, tortured and slapped around. And now, it's time to get...a head. Frank Miller's steel-gutted hero Marv from Dark Horse's *Sin City* is available in a 5-inch cold-cast bust this August. Sculptor Randy Bowen has done what the cops couldn't—perfectly capture Marv. This statue, from Dark Horse and Bowen Designs, is incredibly detailed (down to the scars on his ugly mug) and comes painted in black, white and gray, with splotches of color. Limited to 4,000 copies, it'll cost ya a mere $42. But if you're too damn cheap to buy this puppy, be sure to check out our Sin City contest next month, where *Wizard*'ll give ya a chance to win this very bust!



Grey Hulk Statue

Marv Bust

Check your local stores for availability of all these funky-fresh products. Or ask your friendly neighborhood comic store to special order 'em for ya!

HEY! Are you a comic company putting out some easy-cheesin' good fun in the form of comic-related merchandise like the Superman Battery Recharger, the Ultimate Nullifier "No More Math Tests" Kit or the Arseface Hand and Face Lotion set? If so, we'd love to include 'em in our groovy "Junk Drawer" column. Of course, we'd also like statues, T-shirts, novelties, magnets, etc. Please send all info and sample products to:

Junk Drawer
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920

JUNK DRAWER video games

By Steve Brown

ALL QUIET ON THE VIDEO FRONT

The months preceding the annual summer E3 video game showcase are usually devoid of new video game releases. Most companies shroud their new games in secrecy, waiting for E3, the industry's biggest convention, to unveil their latest products. And this year's no different, leaving consumers with fewer games being released until mid-summer.

After E3, though, the floodgates crash open and games just start pouring forth. And we'll be there to cover all the latest news. In the meantime, however, *Wizard* has put together a preview of a couple of the best comic book-related games scheduled to hit stores this summer. Hopefully, these'll help sate your hunger until our mega E3 report in two months.

Spawn: The Eternal

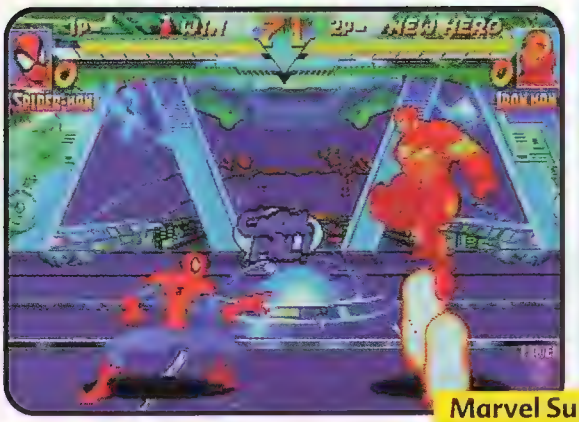
MANUFACTURER: Sony
PLATFORM: PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.99, available late August

Spawn: The Eternal is an action-adventure fighting game that's been in development for over two years. Part of the delay, however, can be attributed to the success of Eidos' super hit *Tomb Raider*. The 3-D, fully explorable environment of *Tomb Raider* inspired Sony to scrap *Spawn*'s original format and duplicate *Raider*'s perspective.

While a "Spawn" movie's coming to the big screen this summer, the game's definitely not an adaptation of it. Instead, *Spawn: The Eternal* is based on the Image comic book and its characters. Sony's programmers, in conjunction with Spawn's creator Todd McFarlane, have taken great pains to create a game that captures the horrific feel of the comic book.

Hosting a total of 18 levels, the game features 39 different Spawn characters including Redeemer, Malebolgia, Angela, Violator, Overt-kill, Sansker and Tremor. Like *Tomb Raider*, *Spawn* is a third-person perspective maze game, with all the characters given a 3-D appearance. A single-player game, the object is to beat up your opponents and obtain magic charms in order to complete individual levels until you've reached the eighth level of

Spawn: The Eternal



Marvel Super Heroes

Hell. There, Spawn will face his soul's keeper, Malebolgia, for the game's final fight. A distinct feature missing from *Spawn* in the accompanying screen shot is, of course, his cape. Sony assures fans that Spawn's living cape will be available as a power-up for protection. Expectations are pretty high on this one and *Wizard* hopes Sony and McFarlane can pull it off.

Marvel Super Heroes

MANUFACTURER: Capcom
PLATFORM: PlayStation, Sega Saturn
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.99, available late July

Marvel Super Heroes is a near-exact translation of last year's arcade hit with rich, detailed, colorful graphics and animation. This one- or two-player *Street Fighter*-type fighting game pits classic Marvel characters against the forces of evil for ultimate control of the Infinity Gauntlet.

You can choose 10 of the mightiest characters in the Marvel Universe including heroes Spider-Man, Iron Man, Hulk, Psylocke, Captain America and Wolverine, or villains Magneto, Shuma-Gorath, Juggernaut and Blackheart. The characters face each other in combat, with the winner of a best-of-three battle advancing to the next round. Dr. Doom and Thanos are the game's bosses, taking you on in a truly heated battle once you've beaten all the other fighters.

What makes this game so incredibly cool is that each character has a wide range of unique moves and throws, like Spider-Man's web-swing or Captain America's shield throw. Along with the regular moves, a player can build up energy in the three-stage special Infinity Meter, which opens up a host of new options including special Infinity Attacks and Infinity Counters. Collecting and activating the six Infinity Gems restores life, increases strength, renews energy and boosts a character's speed.

With great graphics, challenging gameplay and plenty of moves, throws and counters, *Marvel Super Heroes* has much to offer. The home translation, if true to its awesome arcade parent, will be a must-have for any true Marvel and video game fan.

PLUG IN

The Latest in Video Game News

GHOST IN THE PLAYSTATION

Ghost in the Shell, the Japanese animated science-fiction film, gets its own video game for the PlayStation in late 1997. A 3-D shooter, THQ's *Ghost in the Shell* takes place in a futuristic cyber-world where the majority of humans are partially flesh, but mostly machine. With high-tech weaponry, massive explosions and deadly cyborg cyber-chicks, players must go head to head against evil forces and learn how to pilot a Fukochima, a one-man tank controlled by their cybernetic consciousness.

SIMPSONS IN 3-D

Fox Interactive offers up *The Simpsons: Virtual Springfield* this fall. Designed in cooperation with Simpsons creator Matt Groening, it hopes to recreate the hilarious environment of the Simpsons' home town. The infamous Springfield has been completely recreated for your roaming pleasure, using 3-D animation for all exterior locations. Players can amble right up to Moe's Tavern or boldly walk into the Simpsons' house. (Hey, feel free to rummage through their mailbox before you go in.) Sounds like less of a game and more of something that's gotta be seen (and played) to be believed. Unfortunately, it's initially available only for the PC CD-ROM. D'oh!

DIGITIZED X-FILES

Long rumored to be in the works, the truth is finally here. Fox Interactive's *The X-Files* is a live-action adventure game featuring newly filmed footage of Agents Fox Mulder and Dana Scully exclusive to this simulation. The game will be available for both Windows and Macintosh CD-ROMs and is currently slated for an X-mas release.

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR

Fox Interactive's *Aliens vs. Predator* is a hard-core deep-space combat game that allows gamers to play as a Colonial Marine (fighting to save an infested space station), an evil Alien or vicious Predator. Each character has its own strengths and weaknesses, and the game asks players to utilize strategy to overcome the menacing terror coming from all directions. *Aliens vs. Predator* features fast, hi-res 3-D graphics and an awesome variety of warfare capabilities including high-caliber fire power, infra-red stealth features, invisibility and more. It'll be available for PlayStation, Saturn and the PC this Christmas.

THE TOY CHEST BY SCOTT BEATTY

SPAWN: The Movie Figures

With Al Simmons ready to blast through the big screen this August in the much-anticipated "Spawn" feature film, McFarlane Toys is all set to launch a line of Spawn: The Movie action figures.

Arriving this June is the first basic assortment, which includes the aptly named **Regular Spawn**, a film version of the character with mondo guns and bandoleers. Hamburger Spawn, featuring Al Simmons' burned-and-scarred kisser, comes with a hooded overcoat, shovel and gun. And plain ol' regular Al Simmons, the spitting image of actor Michael Jai White, arrives in commando gear with rifle and a backpack which transforms into a working missile launcher.

On the villain front, John Leguizamo's bloated **Clown** comes with snap-on pieces to transform into the demonic Violator. Martin Sheen, who brings **Jason Wynn** to life in the movie, sees his first-ever action figure likeness sport a gun, missile-launching arm and an opening chest mechanism to reveal his ugly sinful heart! Finally, the lovely but lethal **Priest** (a character replacing Rob Liefeld's Chapel in the film) ships with two guns—one's a working water cannon—and a removable backpack/communication station.

Deluxe Spawn: The Movie figures shipping soon include a very monstrous caped Spawn with snap-on hand blades, club arms and grappling hooks. Meanwhile, the **Violator** features an extending jaw, giant attaching horn and light-up eyes. Yet, the best by far is the all-new movie **Malebolgia**, which arrives with a skull staff and his own sound chip featuring movie dialogue!

spawn: the movie basic assortment

Al Simmons

Hamburger Spawn

Clown

Jason Wynn

Priest

Regular Spawn

deluxe spawn: the movie assortment

Spawn

Malebolgia

Violator

MAESTRO, PLEASE

This August, **Toy Biz**, mighty makers of Marvel merchandise, takes the Green Goliath to all-new heights with two—count 'em—TWO new assortments honoring the Incredible Hulk!

First up is the six-inch **Hulk: Transformations** line. Taking characters right out of the Hulk's comic book continuity, Transformations features the first toy renderings of *The Incredible Hulk: Future Imperfect*'s **Maestro**. This future despot Bruce Banner arrives with some of the niftiest deco ever: His armor includes tiny helmets from the defeated Juggernaut, Ultron (pick a number), Iron Man, Dr. Doom and Nova! Plus, he's got Dr. Strange's cloak, Thor's hammer Mjolnir, a gauntlet made of Wolverine's adamantium skeleton and claws, AND Cap's shield!

Hulk 2099 comes with futuristic clip-on weapons, while the more-standard Smart Hulk features a Gamma Blaster Backpack. Last, but not least, is the first **Absorbing Man** figure, arriving with a Breakaway Safe and Wrecking Ball.

Also in August is the five-inch **Hulk: Outcasts**, an assortment keeping more in scale and in style with the UPN "Incredible Hulk" animated series.

A muscle-rippling Battle Hulk leads off the line, which includes four foes for the big guy, each with its own sidekick! Leader-Hulk Metamorphosized leads the pack with his Gargoyle Sidekick. Collectors of female figures might want to check out Chainsaw with her Gamma Outcast Bat. The appropriately named Two-Head comes with a Gamma Outcast Kangaroo-Rat, which features…yup, two heads. And rounding out the line is the fan-favorite **Wendigo**, produced for the first time and including his own Gamma Outcast Rattlesnake!

hulk: transformations

From left: Maestro (w/ Fallen Hero Armor) from Marvel Comics' *The Incredible Hulk: Future Imperfect*, Hulk 2099 (w/ Futuristic Clip-On Weapons), Absorbing Man (w/ Breakaway Safe and Wrecking Ball) and Smart Hulk (w/ Gamma Blaster Backpack)

hulk: outcasts

From left: Leader-Hulk Metamorphosized (w/ Gargoyle Sidekick), Chainsaw (w/ Gamma Outcast Bat), Battle Hulk, Wendigo (w/ Gamma Outcast Rattlesnake) and Two-Head (w/ Gamma Outcast Kangaroo-Rat)

X-MEN: BATTLE BLASTERS

Also shipping in August from Toy Biz is a new assortment of X-Men figures sporting new decos. Look for **X-Men: Battle Blasters**, which features some cool spruced up versions of Wolverine, Beast, Sabretooth and **Storm** (in her punkish mohawk days!), each with their own Battle Blaster base.

From left: Wolverine, Beast, Storm and Sabretooth

Nira X

Sinthia

SKYBOLT OFFERS NEW BAD GIRLS

SkyBolt Toyz, a division of Lightning Entertainment, Inc., follows up its Hellina action figure by serving up Bill Maus' comic heroine **Nira X** this September. Standing six-inches tall, the highly detailed Nira X action figure ships with a plasma gun and detachable cape at a suggested retail price of $10.95. Fans of the character should be on the lookout for the special Platinum Collector's Edition Nira X action figure, limited to just 5,000 pieces, with a suggested price of $14.95.

Fellow Lightning Comics gal pal **Sinthia** will be offered by SkyBolt this October, shipping for the same $10.95 price tag for the standard figure, and $14.95 for the Sinthia Platinum Collector's Edition, also limited to just 5,000 units.

STAR WARS RELEASE CALENDAR

Kenner's official Star Wars website (***http://starwars.hasbro.com***) recently published a comprehensive listing detailing the release dates of all **Star Wars: Power of the Force** product in 1997...and for all you folks unable to surf the Net, we've got the abbreviated version right here. Dates may be subject to change, but this is the official word from Kenner:

JUNE

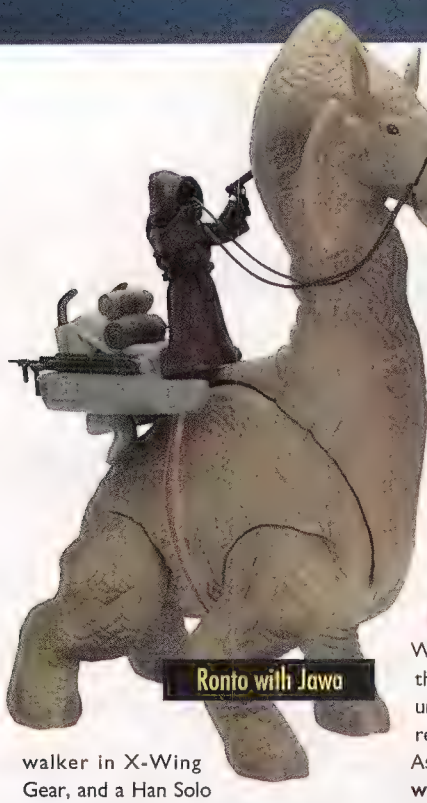
This month sees the debut of a very pleasant surprise: the new **Cinema Scene 3-Packs**! For fans unwilling to scarf down two whole boxes of Froot Loops back in 1995 to obtain the exclusive Han Solo in Stormtrooper Disguise, the new **Death Star Escape 3-Pack** (which should go nicely with the Detention Block Rescue Playset) serves up a re-sculpted Han in Stormtrooper Disguise alongside Luke in Stormtrooper Disguise and a manacled Chewbacca. (Woo hoo!)

Even better is the new **Cantina Showdown 3-Pack**, which includes Ben (Obi-Wan) Kenobi, Ponda Baba (Walrusman) and the first-ever rendering of **Dr. Evazan**. ("I have the death sentence on 12 systems!") All figures in these 3-packs will have slight modifications from the "regular" ones, which should keep serious collectors happy.

JULY

It's gonna be a hot one in July, as plenty o' new figures hit the shelves. On the standard action-figure front, there's the Rebel Fleet Trooper, ASP-7 Droid, Dengar, 4-LOM, Admiral Ackbar, Garindan (The Imperial Snitch), Ponda Baba, the long-awaited **Grand Moff Tarkin** and the Weequay Skiff Guard.

Also in July, look for some nifty Deluxe Figures, including the Hoth Soldier with Anti-Vehicle Laser Cannon and the Snowtrooper with E-Web Heavy Repeating Cannon. Electronic Power F/X Jedi Knight Luke Skywalker and Emperor Palpatine will follow, as will the Speeder Bike with Leia in Endor Gear. As for the 12-inchers, be on the lookout for Boba Fett, Stormtrooper, Princess Leia, Luke Sky-



Ronto with Jawa

walker in X-Wing Gear, and a Han Solo and Luke Skywalker in Stormtrooper Disguise 2-Pack. Whew!

AUGUST

The big release for August is the Kenner website-exclusive **B'omarr Monk**, though at press time no information on how collectors can obtain the droid was available. Other releases will include the Beast Assortment, featuring Jabba the Hutt with Han Solo, Dewback with Sandtrooper and the **Ronto with Jawa**. The Hoth Ice Battle and Endor Ambush Action Playsets will also hit toy shelves.

In addition, look for the new exclusive 12-inch **Imperial Gunner and Grand Moff Tarkin 2-Pack**.

SEPTEMBER

The 3 3/4-inch figures in September will include **Princess Leia Organa as Jabba's Prisoner** (Oh, baby! Slave Girl Leia!), Han Solo in Bespin Gear, the new Emperor's Royal Guard and Snowtrooper.

On the vehicle front, the Imperial AT-AT Walker with AT-AT Driver and AT-AT Commander will finally debut. Plus, the first-ever **Wedge Antilles** figure finally makes an appearance with the release of the *Millennium Falcon* Carry Case.

Meanwhile, the 12-inch figures enjoy a healthy month with Chewbacca, C-3PO, the TIE Fighter Pilot and Admiral "It's a Trap!" Ackbar. Also in line are a bunch of exclusive 12-inchers including Luke Skywalker in Hoth Gear with Wampa 2-Pack, Han Solo in Hoth Gear with Tauntaun 2-Pack, **Cantina Band Alien Assortment** (Featuring all six band members!), **Greedo,** and an Electronic Darth Vader and Obi-Wan Kenobi 2-Pack. Stay tuned for details on availability.

OCTOBER

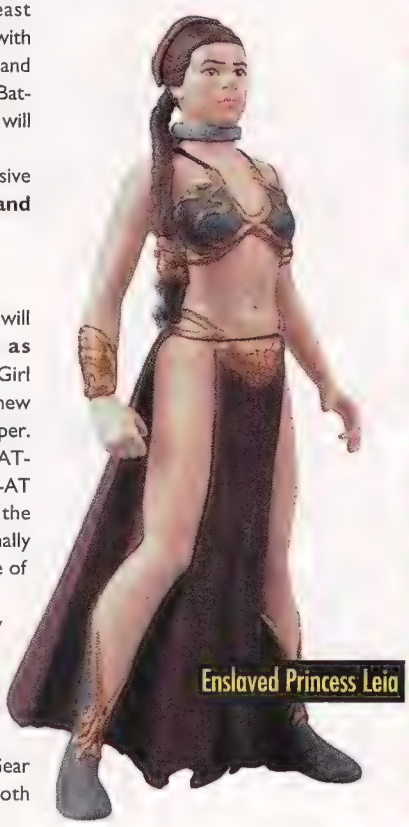
Kenner marks Halloween with some familiar alien faces. This month's 3 3/4-inch figures include Nien Nunb, **Saelt-Marae** (Yak Face), EV-9D9 Droid, the Gamorrean Guard and **Mlakili** (Rancor Keeper).

Also, a 12-inch **AT-AT Driver** debuts, sadly without a scale-size AT-AT, which would be about 10-feet tall!

NOVEMBER

While scads of new Star Wars: Power of the Force product are expected to be unveiled in late Fall's Pre-Toy Fair, the only release slated for November is the Beast Assortment's **Tauntaun with Luke Skywalker in Hoth Gear**. Fans, however, can pretty much rest assured they won't be disappointed when Christmas 1997 rolls around! Check out future "Toy Chest" columns for the latest updates! **W**

If ToyFare editor Scott Beatty had his own scale-size AT-AT, his commute to work would be a whole lot wackier.



Enslaved Princess Leia

WISH LIST

THE 10 FIGURES THAT WIZARD WANTS TO SEE MADE

1) Blink (X-Men)
Great googly moogly, this "Age of Apocalypse" X-girl gets tons o' letters! Okay, Toy Biz — get crackin' and serve her up with some nifty static cling "teleport" portals and removable energy javelins already!

2) X-Man (X-Men)
Coming in a close second is fellow "AoA" refugee, X-Man! This alternate-future Nate Grey (that's Cable, kiddies!) would look pretty spiffy with snap-on TK blasts and light-up eye!

3) Amalgam (DC/Marvel Heroes)
Despite losing a little steam, fans still wanna see action figures based on DC/Marvel Amalgams like Dark Claw, Super Soldier, Dr. Strangefate and Iron Lantern.

4) Nightwing (Total Justice)
The original Bat-sidekick, Dick Grayson, would come with batarangs, truncheon sticks and a retractable jump-line for all-new solo crime-fightin' fun!

5) "New" X-Men Boxed Set (X-Men)
Howzabout a nifty-sweet boxed set of international X-Men from *Giant Size X-Men #1*, including Banshee, Thunderbird, Storm, Colossus, Nightcrawler and Sunfire?

6) Wonder Woman (Total Justice)
If Kenner added the Amazing Amazon to its Total Justice line-up and gave her a nifty shield and spear, then the entire roster of DC's new smash-hit *JLA* would be complete — except for the Martian Manhunter, of course. Heck, make him too!

7) Odin (Avengers: Legends of Power)
Thor and Loki's poppy would make fans silly if he came with his eye patch, snap-on battle armor and mighty uru spear Gungnir to beat the crap outta them mean ol' Frost Giants.

8) Darth Vader w/ Removable Helmet (Star Wars)
This one's been rumored to be in the works for a looooong time! C'mon, Kenner — all he needs is a red lightsaber and removable helmet to reveal the pasty scarred mug of Anakin Skywalker!

9) Gen^{13} (WildStorm)
Still no new WildStorm toys, but fans are just dyin' for Freefall with punkin' outfit change, Fairchild w/ breakaway student clothes (whoo-hoo!), Burnout w/ light-up hands and light up, snap-on flame bolts, Rainmaker w/ light-up eyes and snap-on energy bolts, and Grunge w/ interchangeable "absorbed" arms.

10) Falcon (Marvel Heroes)
We finally got a new Cap — now bring on Sam Wilson, the Falcon! But make him in his original red-and-white costume, with retractable wings and his li'l sidekick falcon (natch) Redwing or nothin' else!

Hey! Keep sending them Top 10 lists! You've already made a difference! Drop us a note with your "dream figures" at:

Toy Wishes
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920
Or e-mail us at:
WizardTGTC@aol.com

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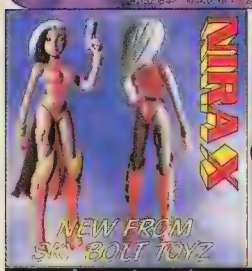

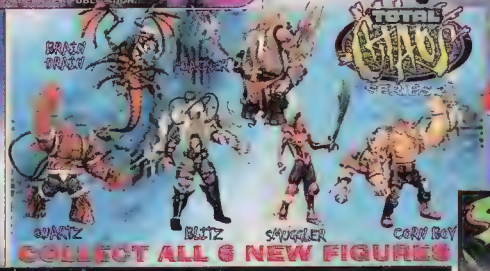

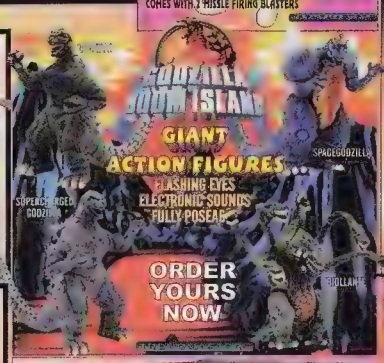

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LET US KNOW! WHAT ARE THE 3 TOP ACTION FIGURE LINES YOU COLLECT.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

HBO Home Video Presents:

The HBO® Home Video Spawn Contest!

CONTEST

Don't miss out! This August, Spawn fans everywhere will be rushing to their video or comic book store to pick up the home video version of the popular HBO animated "Spawn" that premiered May 16! And now HBO Home Video is granting you the opportunity to win not only the "Spawn" home video, but some other awesome prizes, too!

Want a chance at winning a limited edition "Spawn" animation cel? How about one signed by the master Spawnster himself, Todd McFarlane?! Interested?

Here's what you've got to do:

Simply fill out the coupon below and send it in! Think you can handle that, Spawnites?

HBO Home Video "Spawn" cassette available in comic book stores and video stores evrywhere August 5, 1997!

This month's contest is sponsored by HBO Home Video.

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Legal Spawnings

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Todd McFarlane Productions, HBO Home Video, their immediate families and evil monkeys. Damn those evil monkeys! Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: HBO Spawn Home Video Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. I'm a firestarter, twisted firestarter. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. All entries must be received at contest headquarters by August 29, 1997. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. "Contest Headquarters" sounds so important, doesn't it? Wonder how important you'd think it was if you knew it was a cardboard box manned by midgets. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected randomly from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Winning entries will be selected on September 15, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after September 15, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: HBO Spawn Home Video Contest Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

TODD MCFARLANE'S

Spawn

Grand Prize (1): A special limited-edition, framed animation cel signed by Todd McFarlane! And that's not all. You also get an HBO Home Video "Spawn" T-shirt and the HBO Home Video "Spawn" cassette!

First Prize (10): Each winner will get the HBO Home Video "Spawn" cassette. Not too shabby.

Second Prize (25): Twenty-five lucky winners will each get one HBO Home Video "Spawn" T-shirt. Cool!

HBO Animation

HBO HOME VIDEO

TODD MCFARLANE ENTERTAINMENT

Fill this puppy out and put it in an envelope. Send to: HBO Spawn Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is August 29, 1997.

HBO Home Video Spawn Contest Entry Form

DEADLINE IS AUGUST 29, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

HOMEMADE HEROES

THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES.

GRAND PRIZE

All of the following figures were made from plain old, ordinary figures and household materials. The talented Grand Prize Winner receives a box of Marvel Pro Magnets, a set of Marvel Pro Stamps, a set of Marvel Pro die-cut magnets (see below) and a set of Marvel Access Tags! The Runner-Up gets a pack of Marvel Pro Magnets and a set of Marvel Pro die-cut magnets, while everyone else scores a pack of Marvel Pro Magnets and a set of Marvel Pro Stamps. Amazing work, people!

Thanks a bunch to the folks at Crown Pro for the cool prizes!

FAIRCHILD

Timothy Kauszler of Newport News, Va.
Though we're not too sure, this lean, mean Gen13 teen looks like she was created from a Voodoo action figure. And get this man a packaging design job—his box is just the coolest.

RUNNER-UP

BATGIRL

Michael Jaecks of Minneapolis, Minn.
Alicia Silverstone, watch out for this Batgirl! Sculpted from epoxy putty and an animated Batman Catwoman figure, Michael shaped up one fine-looking Batbabe.

WITCHBLADE
Dave Nagy of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada
Taking a McFarlane Toys Angela figure and repainting it with an airbrush, this Witchblade should make the boys and girls at Top Cow moo louder than they ever have before.

DEATH
Joe Kozlowski of Flint, Mich.
From scratch, from nothing, from thin air, this supercool Vertigo Death figure was magically made straight from the mind of Joe. Perhaps he was possessed by Death herself.

MARSHAL LAW
Andy Livingston of Bel Air, Md.
This futuristic Marshal Law figure appears just in time for the *Savage Dragon/Marshal Law* crossover coming this summer! And yo—if ya can't this figger dis figgah out, dis figgah was made from a Rambo action figgah. Yo.

STORM
Adam Garza of San Antonio, Texas
We've seen Storm figures before, but this repainted Phoenix figure with tube and tile adhesive caulk, added pieces of black fabric and bits of an old Toy Biz Storm, is a model Toy Biz should follow for a future Storm figure.

HEY!

If you're interested in entering the homemade figure contest, send well-lit, clear, color photographs (No Polaroids, and put 'em in a cool or funny pose!), along with your name, address, description of how you created your figure, and your full phone number (including area code) to:

HOMEMADE HEROES
c/o Wizard Press
PO Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

Kuper's Comics

Peter Kuper proves that a picture really is worth a thousand words

Chances are you've never heard of Peter Kuper. You've probably seen his work all over the place, though. Confused? Well, with freelance art credits including covers for *Newsweek* and *Time* and illustrations for *Rolling Stone*, *Entertainment Weekly* and *The New Yorker*, you'd have to be blind not to have seen Kuper's artwork.

Despite an impressive portfolio, Kuper remains relatively unknown to the general comic-reading public, even though he's been in the business for over 17 years. "I sort of fall between the cracks," Kuper claims. "I don't mean that in as horrible a way as it sounds, but because I've done different things and I play around with my style, it's been a slow process developing broader recognition from comics fandom. I feel like that visibility factor and the audience factor is something that is going to naturally occur with time and it's not something I have to worry about. I'm content to develop an audience over a longer period of time. Hopefully they'll go back and look at some of my older work and make that stuff more visible."

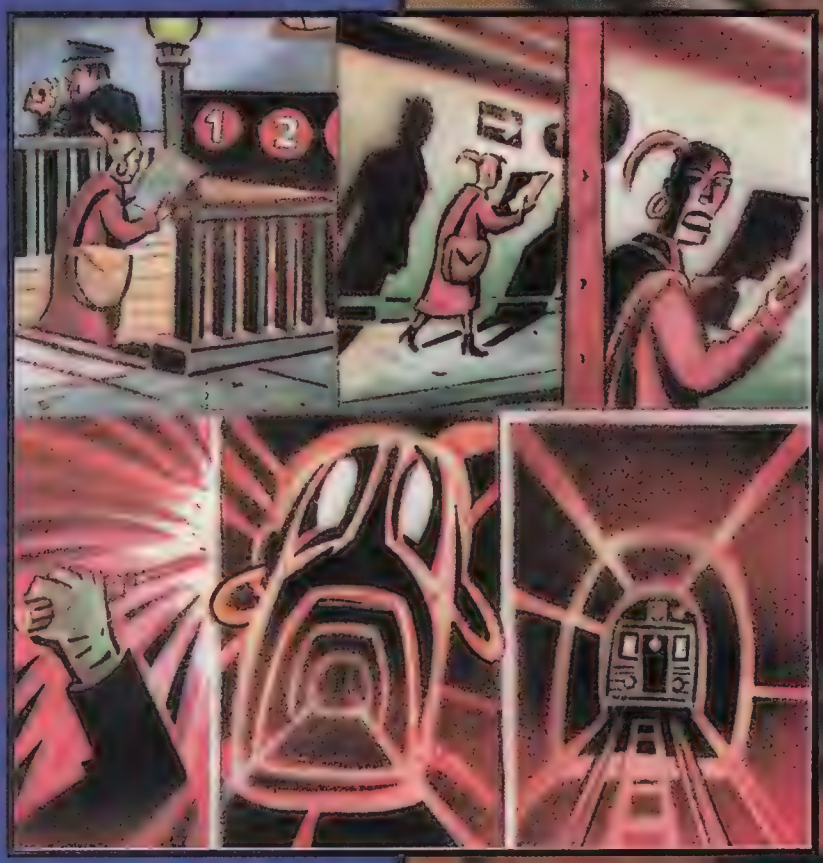
Fans who choose to delve into Kuper's past have a lot of work to select from. Kuper currently has seven different graphic novels in print from four different publishers. His comics run the gamut from politically charged fiction (*The System*) to confessional autobiography (*Stripped*) to literary adaptations (*Give It Up!*, a collection of Franz Kafka short stories) and even travel journals (*ComicsTrips*). With so many comic credits, it's hard for Kuper to pick favorites. "At the given time, what I'm working on is the thing that I prefer, so it changes. I do a lot of different things simply to keep myself engaged in what I'm doing. And sometimes I just want to try out different styles."

By juggling his time between meeting regular deadlines for illustration jobs and comics work, Kuper has naturally merged the two disciplines. "I initially put comics on one side and my illustration in another compartment, but over the years I found that it was difficult to compartmentalize like that. The two have merged together so that they're really inseparable. A lot of the themes blend together and everything's sort of been mixed up happily together."

Specifically, Kuper approaches his illustration jobs as if he's depicting a specific moment that can be captured in a single-panel comic (sometimes he even does wordless comics for his freelance work). And his illustration work has also freed him up to try new techniques with his comic work. "I started working with stencils in my illustrations because that lended itself to single images and strong graphics, but I thought I could also use them in comics. When I did that, it really blurred the line between the two. I also found that because of my illustration background, I liked to do wordless comics because it let the image do a lot of the talking. The symbolic thinking that I have in a lot of my conceptual art I started applying to my comics."

In fact, Kuper probably has the biggest chance to reach a wider audience with his wordless comics, like *The System* (which was published by Vertigo/DC), *Eye of the Beholder* (a weekly comic strip showing city life through the point-of-view of different people and objects that aren't revealed until the last panel)

Kuper's "silent" *System* has garnered rave reviews from major mainstream magazines and newspapers



by tom palmer jr.

Right: A slightly peculiar image from *Stripped*.
Below: Kuper gives the reader a dog's-eye view in *Eye of the Beholder*.

and *Mad Magazine*'s revitalized "Spy vs. Spy" cartoon strip. By removing word balloons and focusing on images, Kuper has distilled comics to their most basic property: a means to tell stories. All of Kuper's comics are excellent (even the ones with words), but his silent strips are brilliant in their execution. They seem so simple on the surface, but they hold a wealth of information and meaning.

Wordless comics hold a special power for Kuper. "They let you communicate with people who don't even speak the same language as you do. Comics wrap around so many different symbols and I love the possibility of exploring the use of an image as language. Removing a word balloon from a panel removes one more preconception that people have about what comics are. I want to play with comics and leap through the preconceptions of what comics are."

Since comics are such an underappreciated artform and Kuper has a pretty successful career as a magazine illustrator, why does he still come back to comics? The answer is simple. "I just think comics is the best artform. Hands down, I find it has the most interesting possibilities for applying everything that I do. And I don't have to pass my ideas by anybody. With my own comics, there's no process of going through a sketch and having it turned down or played with by an editor. I feel that freedom is invaluable all by itself."

For an artist with a career as varied as Kuper's, you'd think that he's explored everything of interest to him. However, Kuper isn't content to just sit back and rest. "As far as subject matters go, nothing pops into my head that I haven't put my toe in. But I do expect to explore animation in the next year." His cartoon plans are top-secret right now, but keep your eyes peeled for Kuper in all the places you'd least expect to see him. W

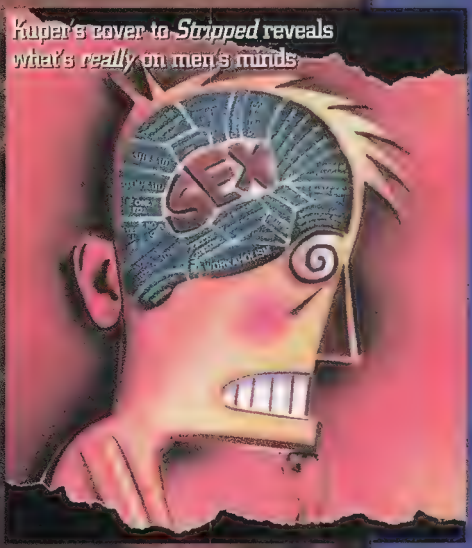
Tom Palmer Jr. also feels freedom is invaluable. He's getting naked right now...

FYI

Eye of the Beholder, Give It Up! and Other Short Stories and *ComicsTrips* are all available from NBM Publishing (185 Madison Ave. Suite 1504, New York, NY 10016). *Stripped, New York, New York* and the series *Wild Life* and *Bleeding Heart* are available from Fantagraphics Books (7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115, or call 1-800-657-1100). *The System* was published as a three-issue mini-series from Vertigo and is also available as a graphic novel. Kuper also edits the long-running comics anthology *World War III Illustrated* (available on finer magazine racks and in two Fantagraphics collections) and self-syndicates the weekly *Eye of the Beholder* strip (which originally began in *The New York Times*). And be sure to pick up a copy of *Mad Magazine* to see Kuper's take on "Spy vs. Spy."

Peter Kuper's Recommended Reading

"As far as comic series go, I read Chris Ware's *Acme Novelty Library* and Dan Clowes' *Eightball*. But I also follow individual artists like Eric Drooker, Seth Tobocman, James Romberger and Ben Katchor. I also look at filmmakers like Alfred Hitchcock and a lot of turn-of-the-century comic strip artists like Lyonel Feininger, George Herriman and E.C. Segar. I try to look at things outside of comics, since there's a tendency to be too self-referential—I've been guilty of it sometimes! I get more out of going to the museum and seeing what other people are doing."



Kuper's cover to *Stripped* reveals what's *really* on men's minds

Recommended Reading

Sheba A comic starring a mummified cat with no arms or legs? What will they think of next? *Sheba* by Walter S. Crane IV may sound totally ridiculous at first, but definitely give this one a try. With snappy dialogue and intricate art, Crane is able to pull the whole thing off and produce a genuinely interesting comic. This comic's got more historical and religious in-jokes than you can shake an obelisk at. Write to Sick Mind Press, P.O. Box 602, N. Cambridge, MA 02140 for more information, or send e-mail to **sheba@ici.net**.

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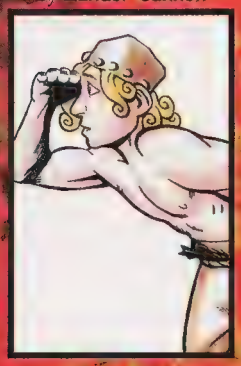
REPLACEMENT GOD
by Zander Cannon



THE MAXX
by Sam Kieth

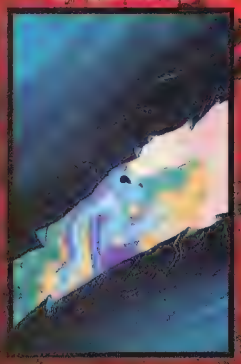
MAGE: THE HERO DEFINED
by Matt Wagner

THE TENTH
by Tony Daniel & Beau Smith

A TOUCH OF SILVER
by Jim Valentino

HEARTBREAKERS
by Anina Bennett & Paul Guinan

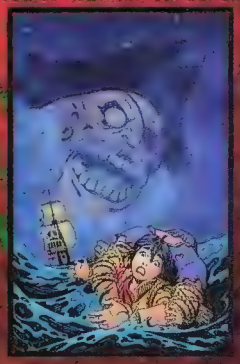
SOULWIND
by Scott Morse



ASTRO CITY
by Kurt Busiek & Brent Anderson

JINX
by Brian Michael Bendis

LEAVE IT TO CHANCE
by James Robinson & Paul Smith



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THE SKINNY

Comic book REVIEWS from the *Wizard* Editors

THE SCORING

6 THE BEST | 5 EXCELLENT | 4 GOOD | 3 SO-SO | 2 UGH | 1 CRAPOLA

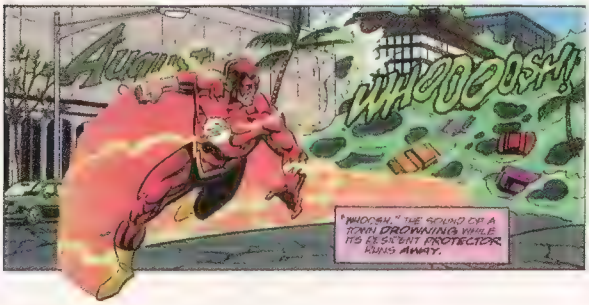
THE FLASH

Has flash but needs more substance

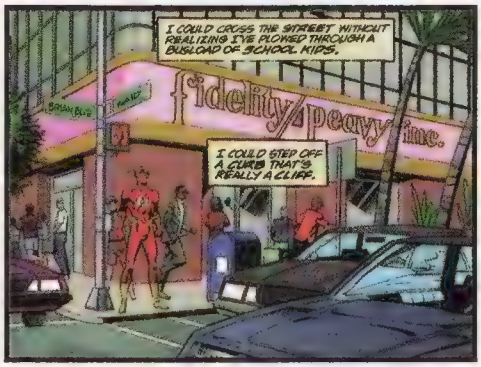
Issues Reviewed: #120-#126
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: DC Comics
Creative Team: Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn, Paul Ryan and John Nyberg
Price/Frequency: $1.75/Monthly

What You Need to Know: The Flash (a.k.a. Wally West) is the fastest man alive. The super-speedster currently fights crime in sunny Santa Marta after his hometown of Keystone City drove him out because of the damage his super-battles were inflicting on the city.

The Good: The Flash is constantly confronted with interesting challenges. You'd think that a guy who can move at super-speed would be able to defeat the bad guys in the blink of an eye, but Wally is usually up against more than he can handle. An illusionist cripples his use of super-speed in issue #124 and Wally can't trust his own senses or speed—he could run someone over or slam into a building. When he tries to stop the path of a tidal wave by digging a trench in the sand at super-speed in #126, he realizes that his efforts aren't enough and a coastal city is ruined because of it. The book's villains, especially the disaster-causing Major Disaster, all use their powers very creatively.



West is portrayed as a very-human and fallible superhero. He still has to deal with a Keystone government that doesn't want him, a girlfriend who doesn't want to move and villains who are sometimes smarter than he is.



The art does a great job telling the story. It's easy for art to be choppy due to the nature of the Flash's powers, but the reader is always kept up to "speed."

Also, each issue is a terrific jumping-on point for new readers reminding you of who the Flash is, what his deal is and giving a brief recap of previous events.

The Bad: The book can have monumental plot elements that should have more impact in the DC Universe and in *Flash* itself. Specifically, in issues #120-#121, a shady candidate is elected president (beating Dole and Clinton) and then resigns on Election Day because his vice-president is a supervillain—yet there was no build-up in other titles; the dramatic build-up isn't taken as seriously. We'll see if the Santa Marta flooding and burning of Keystone City (#126) will have any immediate ramifications.

The art, while clean and uncluttered, could stand to be a lot looser and "flashier" for such a dynamic character who's constantly on the move.

The Buzz: Flash's involvement in *JLA* should bring this book more attention, and *JLA* scribe Grant Morrison will team with Mike Millar for a year-long writing stint on *Flash*.

The Skinny: The book supplies the reader with constant superhero action and adventure that is entertaining and satisfying up to a point. The lack of far-reaching consequences to such monumental affairs can leave you wanting.

The Flash often faces interesting predicaments like an illusionist who makes him afraid to use his powers

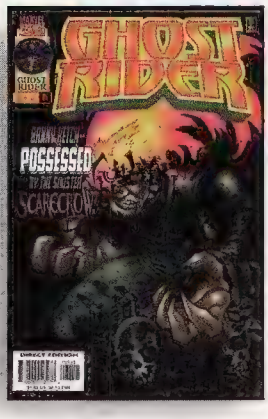
Flash's art is clean and easy to follow

The Verdict: 4 GOOD

GHOST RIDER

Confusion rides this book to death

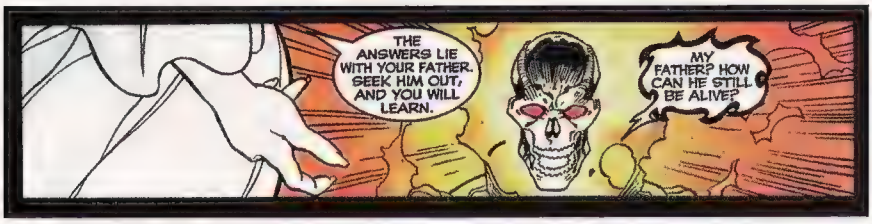
Issues Reviewed: #80-#85
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Marvel Comics
Creative Team: Ivan Velez Jr., Pop Mhan and John Lowe
Price/Frequency: $1.95/Monthly



What You Need to Know: Ghost Rider is a demonic spirit of vengeance that is tied to Danny Ketch, brother to the original Ghost Rider John Blaze. Ketch allows Ghost Rider to take over his body in order to avenge the spilling of innocent blood.

The Good: The basic concept behind this book is a powerful one. The twist of having a demonic character with a flaming skull as the hero is neat, straightforward and makes for an awesome visual. BUT...

The Bad: ...unfortunately, the book's strayed far from its basic concept. In fact, so much so, there is little to no explanation whatsoever for what's going on in this title. *Ghost Rider* is currently wrapped up in so many complex family-related plotlines (Ghost Rider is actually an ancestor of Blaze and Ketch) that you can't tell what's going on. Unless you've been a longtime follower of the book, you'll be lost. This problem is amplified with the overuse of supporting characters such as Blaze, Ketch's mother, his dead sister and a newfound cousin.



And even faithful readers are in for a rough ride. You'll be taken on pointless tangents by sudden (pointless) appearances of pointless guest stars. Howard the Duck appears out of nowhere, and serves only to introduce Moon Boy and Devil Dinosaur into the book. The resulting fights seem out of place, and the whole experience takes you on two issues' worth of distraction from the comic's main plotlines.

Sadly, the book doesn't allow readers to enjoy the Ghost Rider character himself. His current, colorful costume looks too clownish for a spirit of vengeance to wear, and his motorcycle is equally farcical. What happened to his original black leather look—a look that was far more appropriate?

Beyond the costume, it's not as if Rider actually does much in the book. You'll understand that he has super-strength, but he rarely uses his patented penance stare and when he does, it is done without explanation (the stare makes its victim feel the pain that he or she has inflicted on others).

There are other various problems in the title. The cartoony art is inappropriate for *Ghost Rider*. The pacing is off with fight scenes that drag on and on. The dialogue is corny at times. The crises that come up are forced, constantly coming out of nowhere with no back story. There's one panel in issue #81 where Blaze worries about his missing kids with no explanation (actually leaving you to wonder why he isn't looking for them).

The Buzz: The art problems might come to an end in August as original *Ghost Rider* penciler Javier Saltares returns to the title with #89. (Check out the "Flashback Month" issue for a preview.) Hopefully the black leather and motorcycle will follow.

The Skinny: When it debuted in 1990, *Ghost Rider* had an understandable hero in great, straightforward stories with dark, moody artwork. Now there's so much baggage attached to this clownish spirit of vengeance that it makes the title extremely difficult to follow.

THIS is Ghost Rider? Looks more like a beefed-up clown

Plot revelations like this come out of left field and aren't followed up on

The Verdict: 1 CRAPOLA

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE

It's no mystery why this book's a must-read

Issues Reviewed: #41-#48
Genre: Mystery action/adventure
Publisher: Vertigo/DC Comics
Creative Team: Matt Wagner, Steven T. Seagle and Guy Davis
Price/Frequency: $2.50/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Set in the late 1930s (what's known in comic lingo as "The Golden Age"), millionaire Wesley Dodds has visions of crimes in his dreams. Donning an overcoat, gas mask and a sleeping-gas gun, he dresses up as The Sandman and investigates these crimes.

The Good: This book's very different from your average comic. The historical feel to it (and the obvious research behind it) is absolutely amazing. Besides the snippets of news items thrown in (like Hitler's increased actions over in Europe), all the characters speak the lingo and follow the trends of the times. In "The Phantom of the Fair" (#41-#44), it's a sweltering August day, yet the men wear contemporary suits and hats and complain about the balmy weather.

The characters themselves are extremely well-developed, thanks to their realistic dialogue and actions. And no two are alike. Whether it's the nerdy-yet-driven Wesley, the belligerently racist Lt. Burke or Wesley's fiercely independent girlfriend Dian Belmont, they're all fascinating and intricate characters.

The book truly makes you a part of the story, like watching a theatrical performance. After all, it's called *Sandman Mystery Theatre*, not *The Golden Age Sandman*, so the entire cast adds to the story, with Dian and Wesley playing the lead roles. The four-part serial nature of the stories keeps your interest, while adding to the theatrical nature—each issue is a separate "act."

The "superheroes" are just regular guys who sneak around and hide in trees to gather information and the villains are super-*brutal*. With realistic motivations, these bad guys are far more frightening than any of today's costumed foes.

And finally, don't let Davis' sketchy art deceive you. It might take getting used to, but it is surprisingly detail-oriented (the backgrounds in panels are dense) and meshes perfectly with the storytelling to bring you back to the 1930s.

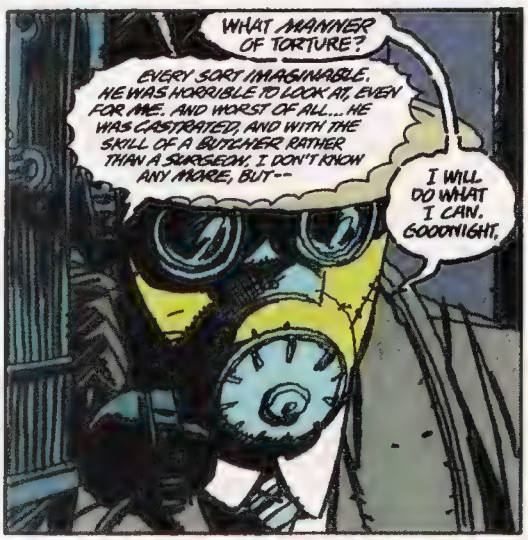
The Bad: Newcomers who pick up the series in the middle of a four-part arc will be totally lost. A "What Happened Previously" box would fix that in a jiffy.

It's not really a "bad," but while occasional references to Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* are neat, as are guest stars like Jim Corrigan (The Spectre) and Ted Knight (Starman), certain readers may be missing the full "experience" if they're not familiar with those characters.

Even though Davis has set the visual style on the book, it's a shame he only does nine issues out of the year, making the art pale in comparison when he's not drawing *SMT*.

The Buzz: There's a very strong cult following to this series and the creators are thankfully staying put for the foreseeable future.

The Skinny: *Sandman Mystery Theatre* succeeds on so many levels: great atmosphere, fascinating characters, horrific villains, neat covers and highly entertaining stories. It's a book you should be reading.



Sandman (at right) faces realistically horrific mysteries to solve and twisted foes to track down

The Verdict: 5 EXCELLENT

PICKS

BEHOLD!

THEY'RE MAD, I TELL YOU!

THE MUST-READ COMICS SHIPPING IN JULY

ADVENTURES IN THE DC UNIVERSE #6

BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN #10

TITLES DENOTED WITH A **MR** CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

ADVENTURES IN THE DC UNIVERSE #6

DC COMICS Ocean Master's got a bad case of sibling rivalry and throne envy. He wants nothing more than to ace his younger brother and replace him as King of Atlantis, something that might be hard to do, considering his brother's the meaner-than-a-merman-with-crabs Aquaman. By Steve Vance, John Delaney and Ron Boyd. **$1.75**

ALPHA FLIGHT #2

MARVEL Alpha Flight is immersed in mysteries as the midget Puck decides to investigate Sasquatch's transformations, Vindicator seeks to find the secrets his bosses at Department H are hiding from the team and…y'know, compared to the fact that Alpha Flight has a midget on the team, none of this seems important. By Steven T. Seagle, Scott Clark and Chris Carlson. Seagle says, "Department H is up to no good and nothing but. Department H smells a little rotten these days and it'll smell a lot rotten starting with issue #2 and continuing on." **$1.99**

AQUAMAN #36

DC COMICS Heavy is the head that wears the crown. Aquaman returns to his loyal subjects, but his son Koryak (who kinda recently destroyed Tritonis under Kordax's mind control) doesn't like it one bit. Then, Aquaman catches his ex-partner Tempest (read: Aqualad) messin' around with his girlfriend Dolphin. Plus, the Atlanteans return to the city of Poseidonis, which is now partially above water. Got all that? By Peter David, Jim Calafiore and P.L. Palmiotti. **$1.75**

ASTRO CITY #11

IMAGE Jack-in-the-Box, Astro City's favorite superheroic son, is on a nightmarish rampage in Astro City. Confused? So's Jack-in-the-Box, and he's gonna find out what's going on. By Kurt Busiek, Brent Anderson and Will Blyberg. **$2.50**

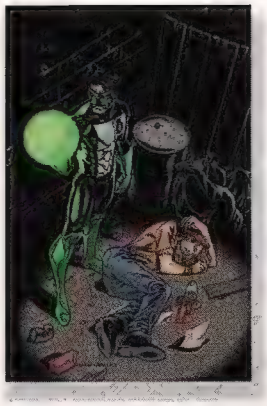
BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN #10 (OF 13)

DC COMICS Batman's hunt for the serial killer Holiday continues, but on Independence Day, the Caped Crusader might have more pressing matters on his mind. As the Mad Hatter and Scarecrow try redecorating Gotham City to their liking, the curvaceous Catwoman tries seducing Batman into living her carefee (and criminal) lifestyle. By Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale. **$2.95**

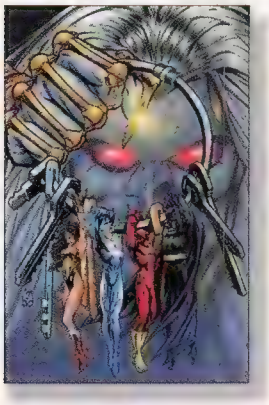
BLOODY MARY: LADY LIBERTY #1 (OF 4)

HELIX/DC COMICS As Bloody Mary (the assassin who dresses like a nun) returns in her second mini-series, this time she's hired to take down a religious nut who's taken control of New York City. The U.S. government's kinda busy fighting World War III in Europe, so it's up to Mary and her insane partner, Major, to whack the wacko and his 500,000 followers. By Garth Ennis and Carlos Ezquerra **$2.50**

BLOODY MARY: LADY LIBERTY #1



GREEN LANTERN #90



JLA #9

JLA #10

FANTASTIC FOUR #11

MARVEL Three heralds of Galactus—the Silver Surfer, Terrax and Firelord—pay a little visit to Earth. It seems their master Galactus is hungry and he wants to solve the deficit problem, end homelessness and put an end to Pauly Shore's movie and TV career by eating the planet like a ham sammich. Mmm...ham. By Jim Lee, Brandon Choi, Brett Booth and Tom McWeeney. **$1.99**

THE FLASH #129

DC COMICS The assembled members of the Flash's Rogues Gallery (Weather Wizard, Captain Cold, Heatwave, Mirror Master and Captain Boomerang) have returned from the dead and are tearing up Keystone City. To put the villains away for good, Flash'll have to make a deal with the devil Neron. And while Neron doesn't take American Express, he just might take the Flash's soul—and then some. By Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn, Paul Ryan and John Nyberg. **$1.75**

GEN[13] #21

IMAGE Trapped in outer space, Gen[13] members Fairchild, Freefall and Grunge (and their new alien pal Kobeh) escape from the Collectors, steal their spaceship and make a break for Earth. Their flight's cut short, however, when Grunge crashes the ship into a derelict spacecraft. With nothing better to do, the team decides to investigate the mysterious ship. Big mistake. By Brandon Choi and Al Rio. This month also sees Gen[13] teaming up with Marvel's Generation X to fight Trance and Emplate in the Gen[13]/Generation X crossover by Brandon Choi, Arthur Adams and Alex Garner. **GEN[13] #21—$2.50; GEN[13]/GENERATION X—$2.95**

GENERATION X #30

MARVEL It's open season on mutants, and Generation X is caught in the crossfire. The X-kids get trapped in the Los Angeles sewer system by the mutant-hunting Zero Tolerance strike force. It's win-or-die-trying time for the team as it makes a desperate last stand. And while the students are fighting for their lives, the White Queen and Banshee must decide if they want to accept help from the evil mutant Empath. By James Robinson and Chris Bachalo. **$1.99**

GREEN LANTERN #90

DC COMICS In issue #50 of *Green Lantern*, Kyle Rayner (that's Green Lantern, for you new guys) was given his power ring by a blue midget in some alley. Well, this issue reveals why he was in that alley that fateful night—can you say "dumpster diving"? Also, Kyle attempts to help a good friend with a serious problem, and faces great sadness when he says goodbye to his girlfriend Donna Troy. No, say it ain't so! By Ron Marz, Chris Batista and Chip Wallace. "It's a real character-driven issue," Marz says, "and the majority of it deals with Kyle finding out his best friend from school is an alcoholic. We actually don't even see Kyle in costume that much." **$1.75**

HELLBOY: ALMOST COLOSSUS #2 (OF 2)

LEGEND/DARK HORSE In the conclusion of this series, Hellboy hunts down the culprit behind a series of plundered gravesites. What he finds, though, is only for the strong-stomached: No, it's not White Castle, but rather a million gallons of boiling human fat. By Mike Mignola. "It's yet another story that is best left to psychiatrists to figure out what the hell I was thinking about," Mignola says, adding that the fat will be used to create a "human fat colossus." Yuck. **$2.95**

HITMAN #18

DC COMICS "Ace of Killers," Part 4 (of 6). The demon Mawzir has Tommy, Catwoman, Natt and Tiegel at its mercy...well, what little mercy it has! To save our heroes, the demons Baytor and Etrigan go hunting in Hell for the Ace of Winchesters, a weapon that can defeat Mawzir. There's one catch—the demons have to get past the Arkannone (the group controlling Mawzir) to get the Ace. By Garth Ennis and John McCrea. **$2.25**

READ THIS BOOK!

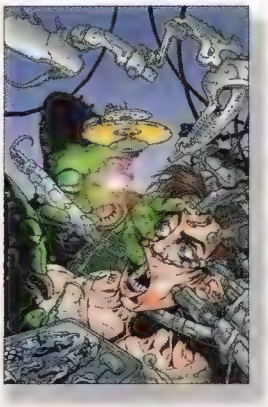
JLA SECRET FILES #1

DC COMICS JLA Month rolls on with *JLA Secret Files* #1, in which DC promises to reveal the Justice League's greatest secrets. The book contains profiles of all the Leaguers, its future members and some villains. The Martian Manhunter takes the spotlight with a solo story and an in-depth interview. In addition, *Files* contains two other stories. The first takes place between *Justice League: A Midsummer's Nightmare* (in which the current team was formed) and *JLA* #1, detailing how the fledgling team gained the public's eye. The second occurs between *JLA* #4 and #5 and deals with the team's first encounter with Superman after his metamorphosis. By Grant Morrison, Mark Millar, Mark Waid, Howard Porter, John Dell, Phil Jimenez and others. Says Morrison, "I'm doing a story that's a day in the life of the Martian Manhunter. His headquarters is in the Antarctic, and he deals with all the problems in the Southern Hemisphere when Superman's in the Northern Hemisphere. The Martian Manhunter's actually the most popular superhero in Australia because they don't see any of the other ones and he's there all the time." **$4.95**

JLA #9-#10

DC COMICS Hey, it's officially "JLA Month" over at DC. Hoo-hah! So besides a bunch o' neat stuff like T-shirts and a *JLA Gallery*, you'll get not one, but TWO fun-filled issues of *JLA*! Double hoo-hah! In *JLA* #9, the League's tormented by the Key, who's trapped them in a series of dream realities. When Green Arrow comes to the rescue, he finds he's gotta beat the League—and the Key—to save the day. In *JLA* #10, evil JLA dopplegangers attack Star City, prompting the JLA to wonder just what the heck a doppleganger is. So who's behind it all? Oh, just some baddies known as the Injustice Gang! By Grant Morrison, Oscar Jimenez, Howard Porter, John Dell and Chip Wallace. Also be sure to check out *JLA/WildC.A.T.s*, where the JLA meet up with Image's superteam the WildC.A.T.s to try and defeat the Lord of Time, a rat-bastard of a villain who's stolen 41st century weapons and armor. By Grant Morrison, Val Semeiks and Kevin Conrad. **JLA #9-#10—$1.95 EACH; JLA/WILDC.A.T.S —$5.95**

JLA/WILDC.A.T.S



MAJOR BUMMER #2

KA-ZAR #5

MARVEL Ka-Zar and his lovely wife, Shanna the She-Devil, move to New York City, where the rent's as high as a crack addict. There, Ka-Zar encounters Spider-Man's enemy, the Rhino, and the two either discuss politics or stomp the living hell out of each other. It could go either way. By Mark Waid, Andy Kubert and Jesse Delperdang. **$1.99**

READ THIS BOOK!

MAGE: THE HERO DEFINED #1

IMAGE Finally, a sequel to *Mage: The Hero Discovered*! This series continues the story of Kevin Matchstick, a cynical young man who seems to possess many of the qualities of the legendary King Arthur, as well as his fabled sword Excalibur—although in Kevin's hands it appears in the form of a glowing, lightning-spewing baseball bat. Here, our hero and his partner Joe run into three Harpies and meet other folks who all seem to possess abilities of legendary heroes of the past. Ultimately, Matchstick has to search for the second Mage, who may (or may not) be able to help him fulfill his destiny. By Matt Wagner, who says, "This time around, Kevin Matchstick is continuing on in his adventures to rid the world of supernatural monsters that lurk in the shadows of every city. Along the way, he encounters all these other superpowered young men who all think they're some reincarnated hero from the past—one fellow thinks he's Hiawatha, one thinks he's Hercules, and so on..." **$2.50**

MAJOR BUMMER #2

DC COMICS Louis Martin, this is your life...and it's a major bummer. (Ha! Get it? Ah, we crack ourselves up.) Anyway, in this issue, the superpowered slacker Lou discovers where his powers came from, gets to fire the awesomely huge gun he built in issue #1, watches two aliens eat the last of his macaroni and cheese, and is the subject of some pretty creepy experiments. And be sure to check out our funky *Major Bummer* feature on page 32! By John Arcudi, Doug Mahnke and Tom Nguyen. **$2.50**

MARVEL TEAM-UP #1

MARVEL Two million dollars are dropped on South Central Los Angeles. A good thing. Except this time, the money was dropped by the evil Euthanasia Underground. A bad thing. To clean up the streets, Spider-Man and Generation X join forces to give a hoot. Plus, a new mystery man, the Authority, attempts to use Spider-Man to uncover information about some equally mysterious upcoming event. By Tom Peyer, Pat Olliffe and Al Williamson. Peyer says, "It's just a big free-for-all in this poor neighborhood where there's a rain of money. Generation X is there, and meanwhile, they come up against a supervillain organization that wants to save South Central Los Angeles by blowing it up." **$1.99**

POISON ELVES #25

SIRIUS How to distinguish a Poison Elf from your average, run-of-the-mill, non-poisonous Elf? Lick him or her. Licking the Poison Elf will cause swelling, abdominal discomfort, bleeding from the eyes and uncontrollable flatulence. Licking an average Elf will either result in a slap in the face or a date for Saturday night. In this issue, Lusipher is forced to quit Sanctuary and leave his girlfriend behind. Maybe too many people were licking him. By Drew Hayes. **$2.95**

PREACHER #29

VERTIGO/DC Louisiana gets a little holier as Jesse Custer, his girlfriend Tulip and blood-sucking buddy Cassidy the Vampire make for the Big Easy. On the road, Jesse considers taking the angel's advice and giving up the search for God. Plus, the disfigured Arseface may be returning...but we ain't telling. So there! By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. **MR $2.50**

PRIDE AND JOY #3 (OF 4)

VERTIGO/DC This is *definitely* not the Brady Bunch. Jimmy and his family are on the lam, hiding from a hitman who, for some

unknown reason, has been hired to kill them. Having nothing better to do, Jimmy decides to share some quality time with his son and explain just why the heck they're in this predicament. By Garth Ennis and John Higgins. **MR $2.50**

QUANTUM AND WOODY #6

ACCLAIM COMICS Where's Woody? The poor schnook's just nowhere to be found. (He's probably off poundin' booze with that poorly dressed ragamuffin Waldo again.) But when Quantum goes looking for Woody, he discovers that Warrant—the man who might have killed both Quantum and Woody's fathers—may still be alive and living in his mom's house. By Christopher Priest, M.D. Bright and Greg Adams. **$2.50**

ROBIN #45

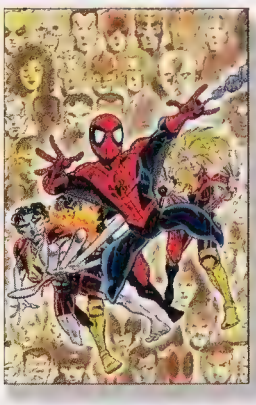
DC COMICS Gotham City's a boiling cauldron of hate and pain, a breeding ground for every two-bit thug and hooligan to ever shake a fist, a playground for the criminally inclined. It's a place where the law fights an endless—and sometimes losing—battle against the forces of evil. It's a city crying out for a hero like Robin. Too bad Robin's stuck at home, grounded by his dad. By Chuck Dixon, Staz Johnson and Bob Smith. **$1.95**

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #54

VERTIGO/DC "The Crone," Part 2 (of 4). Two actors from the radio program "The Coming of Night" have been murdered, and the Golden Age Sandman's on the case, trying to nab the killer. His investigation uncovers a sordid web of twisted relationships among the show's cast and crew. We suspect he'll soon find out that video killed the radio star. By Steven T. Seagle, Matt Wagner and Guy Davis. **MR $2.50**

STARCHILD: MYTHOPOLIS #0

IMAGE The Starchild (Anders Higgins) meets a storytelling beggar at the gates of the world-city Brigadoon. There, the beggar tells a creation myth story to Higgins and an audience of smiths, craftsmen and children. This issue serves as a prologue to the 14-part *Starchild: Mythopolis*. And if you've never read *Starchild* before, give it a shot. It's a really neat fantasy story that's got guys with lotsa hair! By James Owen. **$2.95**



MARVEL TEAM-UP #1

ROBIN #45

PAPERBACK PICKS

Trade Paperbacks You Won't Wanna Miss

THE WIZARD'S TALE

(IMAGE) This all-new, fully painted 128-page fantasy paperback tells the story of the evil wizard Bafflerog Rumplewhisker. It seems ol' Rumplewhisker is the last in a long line of misguided conjurers and it's his job to plague the citizens of the Land of Ever-Night with rain, earthquakes and the like. But when Rumplewhisker uncovers the location of the Book of Worse—a tome which will enable the evil Darksome Council to control the land forever—he begins a bold quest to recover the fabled book. By Kurt Busiek and David Wenzel.

"He's not very good at being evil," says Busiek of Rumplewhisker. "He's kind of a screw-up in the evil wizard department, but it's a family tradition, so he's got all this pressure on him to do the right thing—which in his case is the wrong thing. [The book's] about humanity and hope more than anything else. And it's about the expectations we live under." **$19.95**

STRANGERS IN PARADISE #7

IMAGE While Katchoo returns to Los Angeles to hunt for her friend David, her other pal Francine goes searching for a new place to live. Expect some revelations regarding the appearance of the gun-toting Rachel Hampton and her interest in Francine. Wasn't this on an episode of "Ellen" once? By Terry Moore. **$2.75**

THE SUPERMAN/MADMAN HULLABALOO! #2 (OF 3)

DARK HORSE It's more Hullabaloo action as eight people are given Supes' powers. Superman and Madman are two of the eight, but who are the other six? No one's sure how the abilities were transferred to these people, but Superman's got to get them back before something stinky hits the fan. By Mike Allred. **$2.95**

THE TEEN TITANS #12

DC COMICS The original Teen Titans (Robin, Aqualad, Speedy and Kid Flash—now operating under the names Nightwing, Tempest, Arsenal and Flash) reunite to find their old mentor Mr. Jupiter, and Omen, the current Titans' mysterious houseguest who recently vanished. During the search, the original team tussles with Haze, an unrevealed villain from their past, and one of them is irrevocably changed. But where the heck are the current Titans during all o' this? By Dan Jurgens, Gil Kane and George Pérez. Jurgens says, "What [the Titans' reunion] gives us is a chance to see the anxiety these kids would have had in terms of growing up in the tremendous shadows they lived under. If you're Batman's kid assistant, that's a tremendous shadow to live under." **$2.95**

PICKS

THUNDERBOLTS #6

MARVEL The Thunderbolts (who're really the Masters of Evil in disguise) attempt to liberate New York City's Empire State Building from the control of the Elements of Doom. The Elements outnumber the Thunderbolts 17 (and a half) to one, so things look mighty grim for our heroes—er, villains. Plus, two Thunderbolts fall in love. Hint: Neither of them is the hamburger-faced Citizen V. C'mon, he's got a face only a mother could love. By Kurt Busiek, Mark Bagley and Vince Russell. **$1.99**

UNTOLD TALES OF SPIDER-MAN #24

MARVEL Here's a hint for you: If you're in the Marvel Universe and meet Curt Connors, run like heck. He might try experimenting on you, and this guy's like the most inept scientist in the cosmos. Here, he attempts to turn Batwing back to a human, but fails and further mutates poor Batty. Now Batwing's gotta beg Spidey to cure him...or kill him. By Kurt Busiek, Pat Olliffe and Bob McLeod. **99 CENTS**

THUNDERBOLTS #6

UNTOLD TALES OF SPIDER-MAN #24

VAMPIRELLA: BLOOD LUST #1 (OF 2)

HARRIS Vampirella's dead, but instead of headin' straight to Heaven or Hell, she returns to her home planet of Drakulon, which has pretty much gone to pot in her absence. There, she discovers her mom's plugged up the bloody river Styx, so now savage nomads are chompin' on everyone for their corpuscles. Mmmm. Corpuscles. By James Robinson and Joe Jusko. **$3.95**

YOUNG HEROES IN LOVE #4

DC COMICS Superman's just declined an offer to join the Young Heroes, so team leader Hard Drive throws a tantrum and breaks a lot of stuff. The team also gets a new member, Zip Kid, and the romance between Bonfire and Frosbite simultaneously heats up and cools off. (Get it? Bonfire and Frosbite? Heats up and cools off? Ah, forget it.) By Dan Raspler and Dev Madan. **$1.75**

Also shipping in JULY

Ash: Cinder and Smoke #3 (Event)
Molotov lays siege to the Mid-Town Tower Mall, and Cinder takes Ash to the heart of the nightclub scene. **$2.95**

Avengers #11 (Marvel)
The Avengers fight...the Avengers! (We'd put our money on the Avengers.) Yeah, some guy named Loki's kinda responsible. **$1.99**

Batman #546 (DC Comics)
The Joker and Etrigan the Demon try bringing Hell to Gotham. Literally. **$1.95**

Cable #46 (Marvel)
Cable and Caliban, trapped in Xavier's Institute, try to hold off the Zero Tolerance forces. **$1.99**

Captain America #11 (Marvel)
Cap battles the Sons of the Serpent and learns who their leader is. **$1.99**

Curse of the Spawn #11 (Image)
To save Earth, Angela must destroy the seraphim-lock held by the evil Lilith. **$1.95**

Darkness #7 (Image)
Jackie Estacado (The Darkness) tries resuming his life as a hitman while searching for a way to have sex without dying. **$2.50**

Detective Comics #713 (DC Comics)
Batman fights a cyborg who has mysterious ties to his past. **$1.95**

Gambit #1 (Marvel)
Gambit heads to Miami, where he begins working for the Cuban underworld. **$2.50**

Iron Man #11 (Marvel)
While Iron Man faces Dr. Doom, Madame Hydra discovers the truth behind HYDRA. **$1.99**

Painkiller Jane #2 (Event)
Jane must rescue a kidnapped girl from a Civil War-era prison. **$2.95**

Spider-Man Books (Marvel)
Amazing Spider-Man #426 sees the original Dr. Octopus return from the grave. Morbius' bite gives Spidey a case of vertigo in *Peter Parker: Spider-Man #83*. In *Sensational Spider-Man #19*, a piece of the Living Monolith falls to Earth and turns a woman into something very, very evil. And finally, Flash Thompson confronts his drinking problem in *Spectacular Spider-Man #249*. **$1.99 each**

Star Wars Books (Dark Horse)
In *Star Wars: Dark Force Rising #3*, Luke trains with the evil Jedi Master C'Booth. Over in *Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi—The Fall of the Sith Empire #2*, Jori Daragon, on trial for criminal offenses against the government, is unable to reveal the Empress of the Sith's plans. And finally, a member of the Rogue Squadron dies fighting a group of Imperials in *Star Wars: X-Wing Rogue Squadron—Requiem for a Rogue #4*. **$2.95 each**

Superman Books (DC Comics)
Jimmy Olsen threatens to reveal Superman's identity in *Superman #127* and Intergang puts a price on his head in *Action Comics #737*. Lex Luthor goes on trial in the extra-length *Adventures of Superman #550*. Mainframe and the Superman Revenge Squad threaten Metropolis in *Superman: The Man of Steel #71*. Finally, Ma and Pa Kent reveal all the costumes and gadgets Superman's used throughout his career in *Superman: The Man of Tomorrow #9*. **$1.95 each ; Adventures of Superman—$3.50**

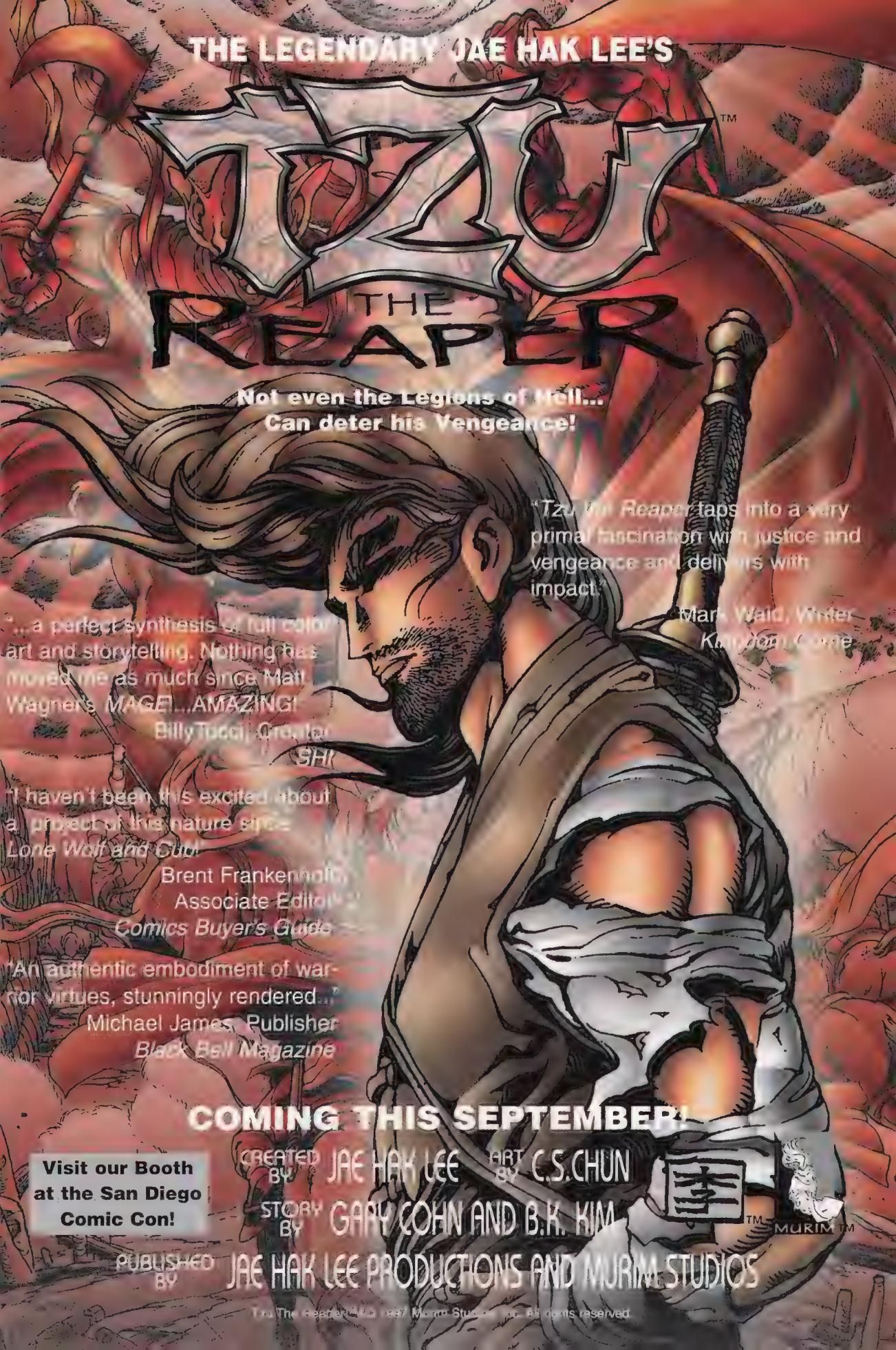
Uncanny X-Men #347 (Marvel)
The spacefaring X-Men get thrown through a damaged stargate, encounter a strange world and meet up with an old enemy. **$1.99**

Witchblade #16 (Image)
Sara tries getting closer to her friend Jake, but a mystery person might get in the way of their relationship. **$2.50**

Wolverine #116 (Marvel)
Wolverine and company visit a town in New Mexico to figure out whether the inhabitants are friends or foes. **$1.99**

X-Man #30 (Marvel)
Nate does a fairly good impression of Hugh Hefner, as three women attach themselves to the X-Man. **$1.99**

X-Men #67 (Marvel)
While Iceman and the mutant Dr. Reyes try evading the Sentinels, an Israeli Mossad agent tries bringing Bastion down. **$1.99**



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Mixx Publications Presents:

The Sailor Moon "Write it and Win" contest

contest

Sailor Moon is one of the hottest manga properties on the market today! But why? Exciting characters? Intriguing storylines? Breathtaking artwork? We wanna know!

How to Enter:

Just tell us in about 100 words why you love Sailor Moon. The more impressive the entry, the better chance you have of winning these exciting prizes:

Grand Prize (1): Signed original Sailor Moon art by Naoko Takeuchi, a copy of *Sailor Moon U-Print* software (for the PC and Macintosh), a one-year subscription to *MixxZine*, a "Sailor Moon" video and a *MixxZine* T-shirt!!

First Prize (5): Five readers will each get *Sailor Moon U-Print* software (for the PC and Macintosh), a "Sailor Moon" video and one *MixxZine* T-shirt.

Second Prize (10): Ten readers will each get a one-year subscription to *MixxZine*, a "Sailor Moon" video, and a *MixxZine* T-shirt.

This month's contest is sponsored by Mixx Publications, mixing it up like nobody's business.

MIXX ZINE

Fill this out, attach your essay and put it in an envelope. Send it to: Sailor Moon Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is August 29, 1997.

Legal Text

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Mixx Publications, their immediate families or to people who say "Manga comics." "Manga" is Japanese for comics. In essence, you're saying "Comic comics." It sounds stupid, so stop it. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Sailor Moon Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. All entries must be received at contest headquarters by August 29, 1997. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Did you ever see a sailor moon? It's not a pretty sight. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on originality and creativity from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Winning entries will be selected on September 15, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after September 15, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Sailor Moon Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

"Write it and Win" Sailor Moon Entry Form

DEADLINE IS AUGUST 29, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

TRAILER PARK

Wizard's column about Hollywood and TV and stuff like that

SUPERMAN GETS CAGED

By Rob Allstetter

Warner Bros. is hoping to begin production on its new **Superman** movie on Oct. 1—and a lot could happen between now and then.

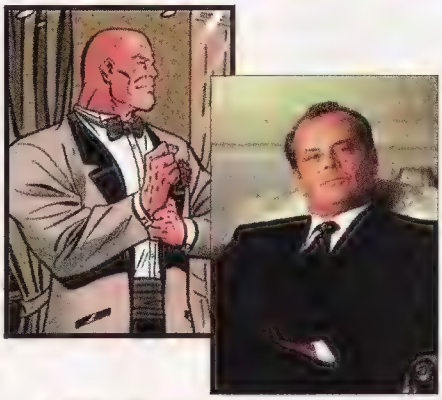
Nicolas Cage appears set as the Man of Steel, although he does have scheduling conflicts with another film, "Snake Eyes," which he wants to do for Paramount Pictures.

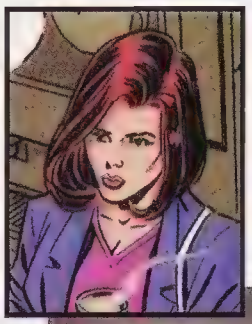
Jim Carrey might be playing Brainiac, but reportedly is asking $20 million and his camp is denying his involvement in the film. Also rumored for parts are **Jack Nicholson** as Lex Luthor and **Sandra Bullock** as Lois Lane.

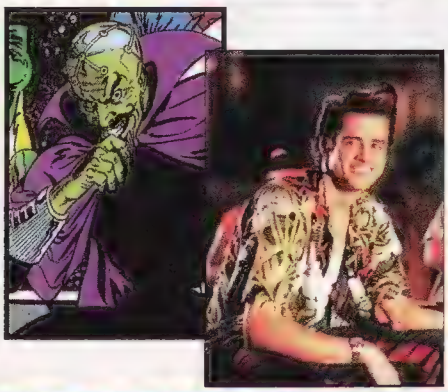
Director **Tim Burton** apparently isn't satisfied with Kevin Smith's script, and, according to the Hollywood trades, has brought in Wesley Strick, who recently wrote "The Saint."

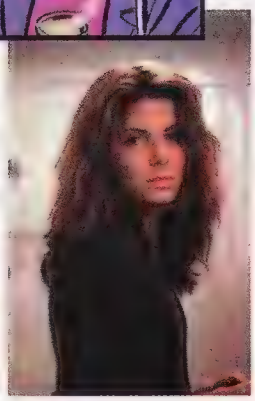
The film, which will probably be called either "Superman Lives" or "Superman Reborn," is tentatively scheduled for release on July 4, 1998.

Meanwhile, in other Super-news, **Supergirl** will be appearing in two episodes of the "Superman" portion of **"The New Batman and Superman Adventures"** on Kids' WB! next season. These were the 40th and 41st episodes of "Superman" and the last ones created before the producers returned to work on "Batman."









All photos courtesy of the Everett Collection, unless otherwise specified

Nicholson as Luthor? Bullock as Lois Lane? Carrey as Brainiac? It could happen in next summer's planned Superman flick

"We wanted a take on her that was not the current version, some sort of alien who is combined with a human girl and is all confused and angst-ridden," said producer Paul Dini.

"And we didn't want to do the blob of protoplasm who takes the shape of Supergirl's form. We actually wanted to do the original version, which is Superman's cousin from Krypton. We ran into a wall with DC because they insisted that Superman be the last Kryptonian. So we did a compromise, that she's from a small planet in the neighboring system that was colonized by Kryptonians, but they've evolved slightly differently.

"She is sort of a cousin, in terms of being from pretty much the same race, and when she shows up on Earth, she's a feisty 16-year-old. She loves being here, she loves being able to fly, she loves having powers."

Supergirl is eager to join Superman and help him whenever she can.

"And he's very protective of her because he doesn't want her rushing into some battle with a supervillain and getting killed," Dini said. "He wants her to realize there's responsibility involved in what she's doing."

Fellow producer Bruce Timm said involving Supergirl in the series took some extra effort.

"Originally we were supposed to stop at episode #39, but we went, 'Oh, wait a minute—we didn't do Supergirl,'" Timm said. "We actually had to steal two episodes from 'Batman.' They had a [Supergirl] toy coming from Kenner, so they allowed us to do those ['Superman' episodes]."

"Witchblade" will get some "Spawn" treatment in 1998

WITCHBLADE CUTS INTO TV

Top Cow Productions has entered a deal with Oliver Stone's Illusion Entertainment to produce a live-action **"Witchblade"** television series. Plans are for a one-hour syndicated show to begin in the fall of 1998.

Stone, Witchblade creator Marc Silvestri and Dan Halstead will be executive producers. Alan McElroy, who wrote the **"Spawn"** film and is co-executive producer of the "Spawn" animated series, will be a writer for "Witchblade." Others on board are Brad Foxhoven and Alan Chu as producers, David Wohl as co-producer/writer and Michael Turner as co-producer/creative consultant.

The lead role has not been cast yet.

'LOIS & CLARK' MEETS KRYPTONITE

For the 1997-98 television season, ABC is dropping one comics-inspired series, keeping one and adding another.

"Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman" has been canceled, "Timecop" has been added and "Sabrina, The Teenage Witch" returns.

Even a wedding couldn't keep "Lois & Clark" from floundering in its fourth season (and the marriage lessened the romantic tension between the two characters). ABC eventually moved "Lois & Clark" from its Sunday-night perch to Saturday night, where it became the network's least-watched show, and the network finally pulled it completely from the schedule during the May sweeps.

At press time, three episodes of "Lois & Clark" have yet to be aired, including one which features Grant Shaud of "Murphy Brown" as Toyman. They will likely air this summer, while reruns of the series move to TNT next fall.

Teri Hatcher, who played Lois, has already moved on, playing a love interest in the new James Bond film, "Tomorrow Never Dies." She also recently revealed she is pregnant. Co-star Dean Cain (Superman) will star in the film "Independence" with Drew Barrymore.

"Timecop," based on the Dark Horse comics and the Jean-Claude Van Damme movie, was put into the choice time period of Mondays at 8 p.m. (ET), just before "Monday Night Football."

The series, from Universal, stars T.W. King as Jack Logan. Thirteen episodes have been ordered.

"Sabrina, The Teenage Witch," based on the Archie Comics character, will have a new time period, Fridays at 8 p.m. (ET), for its second season. "Sabrina" was one of the breakout hits of the past season as a mainstay in ABC's Friday sitcom block.

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"Sabrina" and "Timecop" are in; "Lois & Clark" (above) is out

MIGHTY MARVEL UPDATE

Production was expected to conclude in Vancouver in June on **"Nick Fury,"** the first of what could be several telefilms for Fox based on Marvel Comics' agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.

As previously reported, **David Hasselhoff** of "Baywatch" stars as Nick Fury. **Lisa Rinna** of "Melrose Place" plays Val, and Sandra Hess, who will be in this fall's "Mortal Kombat: Annihilation," plays Viper.

The cast also includes Tracey Westerhouse as Kate Neville, Garry Chalk as Tim "Dum Dum" Dugan, Neil Roberts as Pierce, Tom Beath as Pincer, Stellina Rusich as Gail Runciter, Peter Haworth as Arnim Zola and Campbell Lane as Baron Von Strucker.

The budget of "Nick Fury" is reportedly substantial by television standards and the telefilm includes elaborate sets and location shooting. Rod Hardy is directing from a script by David Goyer. David Roessell, who produced Fox's "Generation X" telefilm, is also producing "Nick Fury."

Will Marvel have a big-budget feature film in the summer of 1998? Word is expected this summer on projects that might include **"Silver Surfer"** or **"X-Men."**

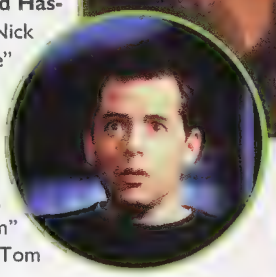
LOOK OUT, IT'S GODZILLA!

May 20, 1998 will be an explosively green day. That's the date TriStar Pictures has scheduled for the release of **"Godzilla,"** a big-budget monster movie from Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin, the men behind last year's blockbuster "Independence Day."

Production on "Godzilla," directed by Emmerich and co-written by Emmerich and Devlin, began in May in New York and returned in June to Los Angeles.

"Because of the phenomenal reaction to 'Independence Day,' Roland and I were fortunate enough to travel around the world to promote it," Devlin said. "It seemed that in every country we were asked the same question: How do you follow up a movie like 'Independence Day'? It was a really tough question to answer. The only thing that seemed remotely in the ballpark was 'Godzilla.'

"It afforded us the opportunity to do something bigger, wilder and more amazing than we'd ever attempted before. The challenge was bringing it back to the way people felt when they sat in the movie theater and saw the very first 'Godzilla' for the very first time. It's something you can only accom-



Matthew Broderick (left) hunts Godzilla next summer

plish with the latest advances in today's special effects technology."

The movie will star **Matthew Broderick** ("Addicted to Love," "Ferris Bueller's Day Off") as a biologist tracking Godzilla, and Jean Reno ("La Femme Nikita," "The Professional") as an insurance agent investigating the mayhem left in Godzilla's wake.

The cast also includes Hank Azaria ("The Birdcage") as an intrepid cameraman, Harry Shearer ("This is Spinal Tap") as a pompous television reporter, Maria Pitillo ("Dear God") as a naïve reporter and Michael Lerner ("Barton Fink") as the mayor of New York City.

Godzilla himself will be created through a series of motion-capture, computer-generated animation and puppets.

THE TURTLES GET A GAL

When the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles premiere in **"Ninja Turtles: The Next Mutation,"** a new live-action, Saturday morning series on Fox next fall, they will be joined by a female turtle, Venus DeMilo.

Venus is the unknown fifth turtle who was mistakenly left behind when Splinter rescued the others from the radioactive ooze. She floated away down a second sewer drain leading to New York's Chinatown, and was later found by Chung I, a martial arts master who trained her in Shanghai, China. Just before Chung I died, he gave her directions to New York City, where she joins the other four turtles.

Venus DeMilo (center) is the newest Turtle, debuting next fall

"Ninja Turtles: The Next Mutation" is scheduled to air Saturdays at 11:30 a.m. The series is produced by Saban Entertainment.

SHORT TAKES

According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, 8-year-old Jake Lloyd ("Jingle All the Way") has been cast to the role of young Anakin Skywalker in **"Star Wars: Balance of the Force,"** the rumored title of the next Star Wars movie. Gannett News Service reported that Ewan McGregor of "Trainspotting" will play young Obi-Wan Kenobi in the new Star Wars film. Filming is expected to commence in June. (Neat tidbit: McGregor's uncle, Dennis Lawson, played Wedge Antilles in the Star Wars Trilogy.)...**"Justice League of America"** has not been picked up as a fall series by CBS. At press time, it was unclear if the two-hour pilot movie would be aired or if the project will be developed as a mid-season replacement series....**"Mortal Kombat: Annihilation,"** originally scheduled for an August release, will now be in theaters on Nov. 21....Kevin Kilner is starring in **"Gene Roddenberry's Earth: Final Conflict,"** a new syndicated science-fiction series from Tribune Entertainment that will be seen in 95 percent of the country's markets beginning this fall...."Perversions of Science," a science-fiction anthology series in the EC Comics-inspired vein of "Tales from the Crypt," began in June on HBO. **William Shatner** ("Star Trek") and Heather Elizabeth Parkhurst ("Sherman Oaks") are among the featured performers. Writers will include Mark Verheiden ("Timecop") and David Goyer ("The Crow: City of Angels," "Blade")....Natasha Henstridge, Michael Madsen and Marg Helgenberger are reprising their roles for a sequel to **"Species."**...The 1995 movie **"Casper,"** based on the Harvey Comics character, will be seen on ABC next fall. Meanwhile, a sequel to the film has been given the go-ahead....Production of Malibu Comics' **"Night Man"** syndicated television series has begun in San Diego. Matt McColm is playing the lead character. **W**

Rob Allstetter has just revealed he was the sixth turtle, who mutated into a powerful human freelancer and ended up in Detroit.

THE BAT-BOX

With **"Batman & Robin"** off and running at the box office, attention is beginning to turn to the next film in the series. It appears that George Clooney, 36, and Chris O'Donnell, 26, will be around for the fifth installment as the Dynamic Duo.

O'Donnell was uncomfortable as Robin in new flick

Christine Loss. Batman & Robin™ & © 1997 DC Comics.

"George is looking forward to doing the next one very much," said "Batman & Robin" producer Peter Macgregor-Scott. "We've had a great time together."

Much has been made about Clooney's lighter approach to the character. Macgregor-Scott said he thinks Clooney's just right as the Caped Crusader and Bruce Wayne.

"He's got a very nice take on how to approach both roles," Macgregor-Scott said. "You feel like you could have him come over to your house and have dinner or you could go up and talk to him."

• In other Bat-news, **Chris O'Donnell** said his new Robin costume was more uncomfortable and more involved than the one he wore in "Batman Forever."

"But the thing that drives me more crazy than anything is the damn mask I have, because it's glued on to my face," O'Donnell said. "It's just like this sticky, gross thing, and when you start sweating, the sweat puddles up and if you touch it, it just kind of drains down."

• Stunt coordinator Alex Field taught **Alicia Silverstone** to ride a motorcycle as Batgirl. Unlike her character in "Clueless," Silverstone became adept on the road.

"In one afternoon, she got it," Field said. "She had never even driven a stick-shift before and she was shifting the motorcycle within a couple of hours and riding around on the back lot. She did terrific."

Field had the same review for Clooney's Bat-action.

"George is very physical," he said. "He always playing basketball. He makes me smile all the time. Everything's fun for him and he gets right in there with the suit."

• The freezing scenes in "Batman & Robin" were created by the wizardry of John Dykstra (**"Star Wars"**) and Rick Baker, who returned from "Batman Forever."

"What it takes to freeze people and unfreeze people on screen can be pretty tedious," said director Joel Schumacher. "It's a combination of many, many things...it's very, very time-consuming."

• The straight-to-video **"Batman: Sub Zero"** animated movie, which features Mr. Freeze as the villain, has been delayed until an October release. It was originally going to be released in conjunction with "Batman & Robin." The film will reportedly feature extensive computer-generated animation. ■ *RA*

Celebrity Profile MIKO HUGHES

He's been in eight feature films, beginning with "Pet Sematary," and he's acted with the likes of Tom Hanks.

And Miko Hughes is just 10 years old.

Miko's latest role is Zack, the street kid who befriends Spawn in the "Spawn" live-action film due in theaters on Aug. 8. Just finishing a tough scene in which his father dies on a rainy, dark street after being attacked by the Violator, the young actor (who starred in "Apollo 13" with Hanks, and also does the voice of Louie's little brother on "Life with Louie") still beams through his drab, wet clothes when talking about his favorite comic book character.

Miko and his mother invited *Wizard* into his trailer for tuna and salami sandwiches, and while showing off his Nintendo 64 skills, Miko offered his spin on "Spawn."

On being in the film: "This is so cool. I don't care if I get another movie in my life. But, really, I do want to do more movies."
Is he a Spawn fan? "I'm a *real* Spawn fan. [I've been] getting all the comics and action figures since they've been coming out."
Why Spawn is cool: "Most superheroes are kind of corny. I think Spider-Man and stuff like that is kind of dull. This is more real and down-to-Earth. I like Spawn's powers. The Spawn outfit is amazing. It's a lot different than in the comic books, but it's still pretty cool."
Todd McFarlane: "He's the best. I can't wait to meet him."
His character's relationship with Spawn: "At first, he doesn't want to be friends, but then he gets to know me."
The toughest scenes: "The crying ones. They're real hard."
Video games: "I'm a total video-game fanatic."
On being an actor: "Yeah, it's fun. I get to meet a lot of people and go on cool sets. You get to go to neat places, stay in hotels and all kinds of neat stuff." ■ *RA*

SPECIAL REPORT on next page

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SPECIAL REPORT: BLOOD ON THE BIG SCREEN

By Rob Allstetter

'Blade' puts Wesley Snipes in the middle of fangs and fury

The faint red footprints begin just outside the building, a former hair products plant in Canoga Park, Calif. As you wind through the corridors of the production offices for the Blade live-action film, the frequency and intensity of the footprints increase, like a macabre trail to a crime scene. One last tight hallway, and suddenly you're on the set—a meat-packing room with a subterranean feel. What appears to be blood is dripping everywhere—sticky crimson liquid on the floors, on the walls and all over the clothes and faces of some 30 attractive young men and women. Their open mouths reveal fangs, and you realize you've just crashed a vampire party, not some remake of "Carrie."

Wesley Snipes arrives on the set, dressed totally in black, with tattoos on his neck, and a big shotgun and silver stakes to his side. As Blade, Marvel Comics' vampire hunter, his presence sends the 20-or-so bloodsuckers scurrying in fear over the strobe-lighted floor. One vampire, an Asian female with red streaks defiling her white jacket, defiantly grabs a pair of meat hooks and begins twirling them with martial arts menace. She charges toward Blade, and Snipes systematically takes his gun and fires.

Ka-blammm! With the aid of a wire, the vampire recoils from the blast, and the take is cut. Steve Norrington, the film's frenetic British director, quickly checks the replay on his monitor and happily reenacts Blade's actions himself.

"Ka-blammm!" he exclaims, firing his imaginary gun.

Norrington beams. The scene is good. Bloody good.

"This one is awesome. It's sick," Snipes says, smiling later about the scene. "It's non-stop [action] from beginning to end."

If Snipes seems to getting more satisfaction than usual, it's because he's a first-time producer with "Blade." Snipes' Amen-Ra company is teaming with New Line Cinema and Marvel on the $45-million, sure-to-be-R-rated flick.

And while Blade is hardly an icon character in the Marvel Universe, the movie could finally put Marvel on the cinematic map. Due in February, "Blade" crosses genres—comic books, horror and action—as a well-timed film in Snipes' growing career, which recently included the film "Murder at 1600" and speed-bumped over a Black Panther project he still hopes to do with Marvel.

"I've played a lot of cops and all of the good-guy stuff, so I wanted to do something a little more edgy," Snipes says, "with overtones of the whole 'New Jack City'-type of danger. This was perfect.

"Blade's a bad guy who's a good guy who's a bad guy who's kind of sort of a good guy…who's really just misunderstood."

Blade is half-human and half-vampire, but belongs to neither group in the film.

"The character in the comic book, he's living more of a dual life," Snipes says. "He has romance and you see him out of costume. You see him interacting with humans on a normal level.

"I'm not approaching it that way. I'm playing a guy who accepts that he's different. He keeps a distance from humans as much as he can, because he's an anomaly. But at the same time, he's sensitive to and susceptible to their emotions."

Adds screenwriter David Goyer: "He's a character that's filled with self-loathing. He's a character who operates on hate, for the people who made him what he is, and for himself. He's a character who uses that anger as a way to motivate himself. And if you were to take that anger away from Blade, the question would be: What would he do with his life?"

Goyer's story pits Blade against Deacon Frost, a Generation X vampire played by Stephen Dorff. Frost seizes control of the Assembly of Vampire Lords and attempts to invoke a sinister vampire god, La Magra, and bring about an apocalypse known in the vampire world as The Blood Tide.

"The vampires won't accept Blade, and he feels the humans won't accept him, so he's caught between the two worlds," Goyer says. "Deacon Frost, on the other hand, has completely embraced the world of vampires, and says to Blade, 'You do belong with us, and we can give you all the acceptance you've always craved.' So, that's the thing he's trying to tempt Blade with."

Blade is assisted by Whistler (played by Kris Kristofferson), who has been his mentor since his teenage years, and Karen, a doctor played by N'Bushe Wright, with whom he reluctantly forms a relationship.

Bruce Talamon/New Line. © 1997 New Line Cinema.

The cast also includes Donal Logue, the taxi driver from those MTV commercials, former adult film and "Melrose Place" star Traci Lords and even Marvel's Stan Lee, who has a bit part as a cop.

Goyer says his intention was to throw out the romanticized Anne Rice concept of vampirism.

"The whole idea was to demystify vampires and, initially, the idea was to approach it from more of a street angle," he says. "We intended to explain vampirism in medical terms. The approach is as if vampires really existed, and they're not these kind of baroque characters."

While the story appears to have deep characterization and even racial overtones, with Frost proclaiming vampires the master race and calling Blade an "Uncle Tom," there's also plenty of action for Snipes, an accomplished martial artist.

"It's the first chance to go all-out and pay a little homage to some of the Asian films," he says. "I got a chance to do a lot of hand-to-hand combat and incorporate a number of different styles: We're doing weapons, we're doing swords, we're doing wire work—which is stuff they only do in Hong Kong. We're doing mass-spectacle types of fight scenes."

The "Blade" script, written some three years ago, started a strong relationship between Marvel and Goyer, which will bear fruit in the coming months with "Blade" and a "Nick Fury" telefilm. Goyer, who also wrote "The Crow: City of Angels," says he feels "Blade" will satisfy comic book readers with its faithfulness.

"I'm a huge comic book fan and I've always liked Blade," Goyer says. "He was a character I've always had a fondness for. New Line originally wanted to something that was almost a spoof. And I said, 'No.'

"There is humor in the film, but I wanted to do it dead serious. And actually treat the character with respect." W

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CHARACTER PROFILE:

Grifter

BY MATTHEW BRADY

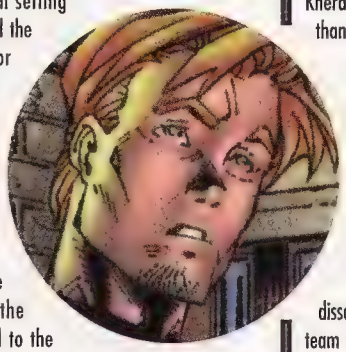
VITAL STATS

REAL NAME: Cole Cash
AGE: unknown
HEIGHT: 6' 3"
WEIGHT: 195 lbs.
HAIR COLOR: Blond
EYE COLOR: Blue
OTHER ALIAS: Deadeye (of Team 7)
FIRST APPEARANCE: *WildC.A.T.s* #1
TITLES CURRENTLY APPEARING IN: *Grifter* and *WildC.A.T.s*
MAJOR ENEMIES: Hightower, Charlatan, Pike, The Quiet Men, Sayonara and Helspont

ORIGIN

Abandoned to the streets at an early age, young Cole Cash was taken in by a Chicago mob family, who trained him well in street smarts and petty crime. However, Cash got caught and wound up in jail before his criminal career became too serious.

After his jail time, intent on setting himself straight, Cash entered the military and was tapped for special forces training to join an elite combat team called Team7 for International Operations (a governmental espionage division).



Cash served with Team 7 for many years, forging strong friendships with the other members. However, the team's loyalty was stretched to the breaking point when the men were exposed to a substance called the Gen-Factor by their superiors. As a result of the exposure, Cash and his teammates gained limited superpowers; Cash gained limited psychic ability and his aging was slowed to an unknown degree. Team 7 dissolved shortly after the exposure, and the members went their separate ways for a time, serving with various intelligence organizations.

During these years, Cash met Zealot, a female warrior in an amazon-like tribe called the Coda. Zealot and Cash fell in love, and she taught him the ways of the Coda assassins. As he learned several new skills, Cash psychically rejected his Gen-Factor powers, nearly driving himself mad in the process. Shortly thereafter, Cash donned a characteristic red mask, took the name Grifter and instead of his powers he turned to simpler weapons like hand blasters.

When the two learned of an alien threat known as the Daemonites, Grifter and Zealot joined a government strike force called the WildC.A.T.s.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

Cash served with the WildC.A.T.s for many missions, often accepting missions that had little or no chance of success. Cash has also served as the WildC.A.T.s' information-gatherer, using quasi-legal means to track down information vital to the team.

Throughout his tenure with the 'C.A.T.s, Cash has always had a strong sense of loyalty to his Team 7 friends, and has frequently been called away from the team at a moment's notice. During these solo adventures, he has re-teamed with his ex-colleagues, often facing threats from their shared past.

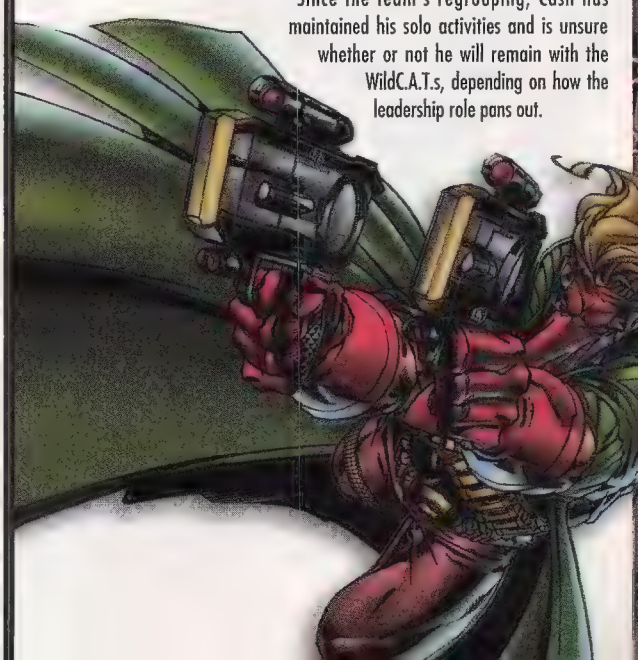
Cash's relationship with his teammates reached its breaking point when the team was forced to side with Hightower, Cash's sworn enemy, during a recent conflict. Disgusted by the team's temporary alliance, Cash left the team and went solo. By the time the conflict ended, his WildC.A.T.s teammates were missing and presumed dead (they had actually ventured into outer space, to visit the planet Khera). Cash mourned them, and moved on, remaining a solo operative rather than joining the replacement WildC.A.T.s.

Cash's solo activities during this time often teamed him with his Team 7 friends, his brother (Max Cash, a member of the new 'C.A.T.s), and other agents and colleagues from his days as an intelligence operative.

After many months, the original WildC.A.T.s returned to Earth just in time to help save the planet in the "Fire From Heaven" conflict, during which Cash's former Team 7 teammate Deathblow was killed. Cash took Deathblow's death very hard, and his standing with the WildC.A.T.s became strained even further, especially after he learned that Zealot and Spartan came back from Khera as lovers.

Thanks to enemy infiltration and internal battles, the replacement 'C.A.T.s dissolved, leading to a period of almost-open conflict between team members. The team finally reorganized, though both Spartan and Cash claimed leadership of the team. The two have maintained an uneasy truce to this day.

Since the team's regrouping, Cash has maintained his solo activities and is unsure whether or not he will remain with the WildC.A.T.s, depending on how the leadership role pans out.



UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

First the bad news: *Grifter* ends with #14 (shipping in August), which concludes the ongoing storyline that pits brother against brother as Cole and Max find themselves on opposite sides of a major, *major* family dispute. Look for Cole's bud, the real Joe the Dead, to show up for the finale.

Now the good news: Grifter's series is being canned partly to allow him to take a more active role in the WildC.A.T.s, vying for the position of leader with Max, who will return to the 'C.A.T.s. (At this point, Spartan is missing from the team, leaving the top spot open.) Look for both Cole and Max to jaunt through time in pursuit of the Puritans starting with issue #40, and leading up to the blow-out issue #50. Seems that the Puritans plan to wipe out all alien influence throughout Earth's history, and the 'C.A.T.s are dead-set on stopping 'em.

RECOMMENDED HIGHLIGHTS

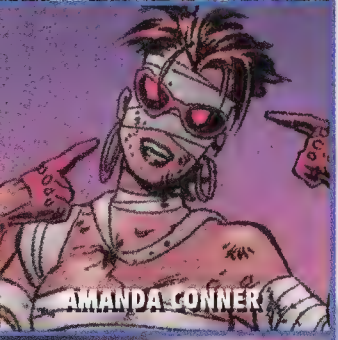
Want a nice, big slice of Grifter pie? Check out these prime cuts, choice-selected by *Grifter* writer Steven Grant, *WildC.A.T.s* writer Brandon Choi and the *Wizard* staff:

- ***Team 7* (original mini-series) #1-#4**—"I really enjoyed [writer] Chuck Dixon's portrayal of the team members, especially Cole," Choi says. "He really wove Cole's background into the whole Team 7 story in a very believable fashion."
- ***Grifter* #2 (current series)**—"This issue showed Grifter as the con man," Grant says. "It's a part of his personality that rarely gets the spotlight, so it was nice to see it out front."
- ***WildC.A.T.s* #31**—The aftermath of the "Fire From Heaven" crossover. Cash deals with Deathblow's death, Zealot's betrayal and supercriminals running all over Manhattan at the same time.

SIMILAR TASTES

You like *Grifter* and want stuff that's kinda like it? Steven Grant recommends these choice books: Acclaim's *Bloodshot*, Image's *Damned* and DC's *Unknown Soldier* mini-series. For books without pictures, Grant recommends *Dirty White Boys* by Stephen Hunter and *Prowlers* by Eugene Izzi. W

A frequent Wizard *contributor, Matthew Brady was once in an intelligence organization. However, once they learned he cheated on his entrance test, and has very limited intelligence, they tossed him out on his can.*



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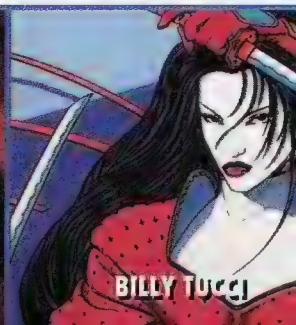

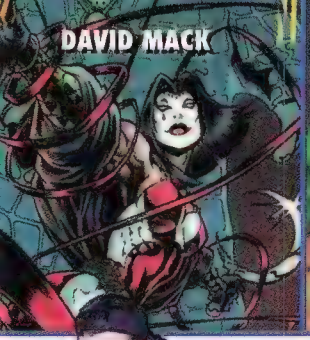

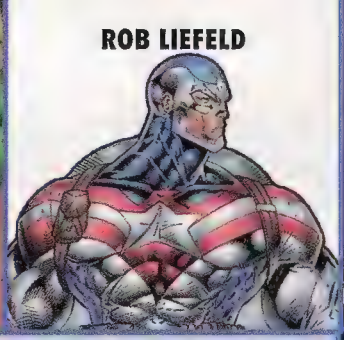

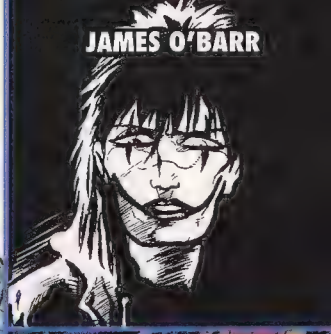

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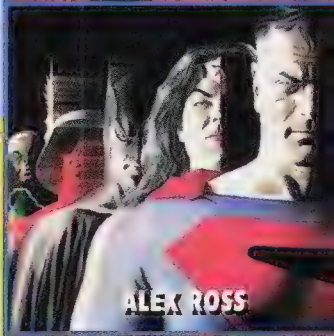

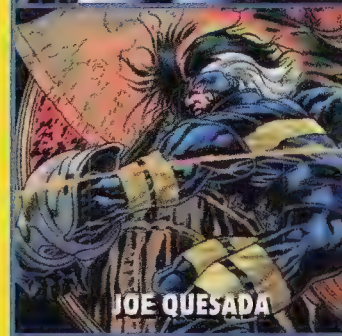

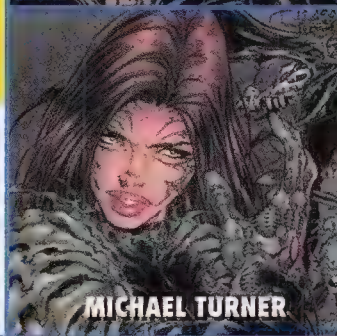

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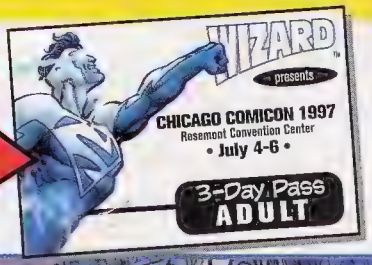

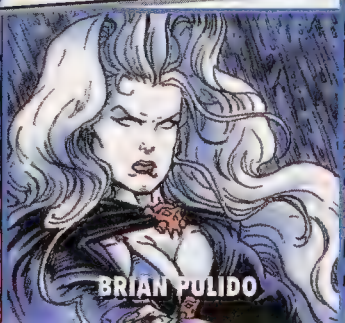

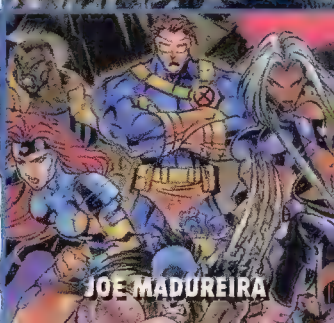

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MANGA SCENE

By Carl Gustav Horn

A GUIDE TO JAPANESE COMICS AND ANIMATION BOTH PAST AND PRESENT

HEAD GAMES

The 'Akira' creator spins a tight story of psychic terror in 'Domu'

Old people, says comedian George Carlin, are just bent kids. And they don't come any more bent than "Old Cho" Uchida, the half-senile senior citizen who sits all day on a public housing park bench in Katsuhiro Otomo's *Domu: A Child's Dream*.

Old Cho's a greedy brat; his apartment is crammed with his toys, all things he stole from his now-dead neighbors. And Old Cho's a mean little guy. He'll put nasty thoughts and suggestions in a person's head like "Jump off the roof," "Shoot your son" and "Take that hobby knife out of your desk—and slit your own throat with it."

And people do what Old Cho tells them, because this 65-year-old coot is the most powerful psychic in Japan, holding silent dominion over his housing block, with no one to ever suspect it—until the day a little girl moves in with powers of her own. The plot of *Domu* involves two separate but converging tracks: the Tokyo police's investigation into the apartment complex, where 25 people have died under unexplained circumstances in the past three years, and a little girl named Etsuko's struggle to halt Cho's manipulations.

In Japan, *Domu* became a best seller when it was released as a collected graphic novel in 1983. Its particular audience included people who hadn't enjoyed manga before, many of whom felt fresh air was needed in the medium. They found it, it seems, in Otomo's sophisticated writing and art style. *Domu* was a critical success as well. It remains the only manga to ever win Japan's Science Fiction Grand Prix Award, which, like the Nebula Award in the United States is voted upon by science-fiction writers themselves. Otomo gained both recognition and popularity for *Domu*. This fame would carry over to his next product, the epic *Akira*.

Since both *Domu* and *Akira* involve the theme of destructive psychic warfare in an urban setting, they're prime for comparison. But, in some ways, the much-tighter *Domu* is a more satisfying read than the sprawling, 2,000-page-plus *Akira*. Tokyo gets blown up three times in *Akira*, and the millions of dead are anonymous. In *Domu*, the victims are confined to a single housing complex and the body count reads more harshly,

Old Cho is *Domu's* powerful psychic terrorist, preying on residents in his Tokyo housing block

Cho and Etsuko's initial confrontation

With his eerie grimace, Cho makes *Domu* a frightening tale of horror and suspense

because the victims are recognizable.

Instead of *Akira*'s offbeat biker punks, revolutionaries and mystics, *Domu* focuses on "ordinary" people a person might find in any large apartment building: the kid who'll never tell how his drunk dad beats him, the blank-eyed mother who pushes an empty stroller for her baby born dead, the retarded man who is the subject of rumors he tried to molest a little girl. In this community of the downtrodden, it's quite easy to see how Cho picks off people one by one, and how his psychic malice pushes those whose lives are already on the edge.

Even though *Domu* is called a science-fiction story, it reads like a horror tale. No attempt, as in *Akira*, is ever made to provide a scientific-sounding explanation for the powers of Etsuko and Old Cho—indeed, we aren't told anything about their origins. They simply have this incredible force within their childlike minds. And they are simply a nice kid and a mean one, both of whom end up unleashing forces beyond their control. It's the idea of the strangeness of ordinary people that gives the writing in *Domu* its impact.

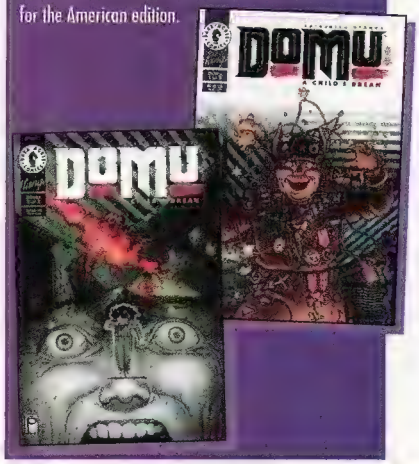
Fans of Otomo's artwork are not going to be disappointed, either. *Domu* is where Otomo first demonstrated his mastery of perspective, a mastery that comes into play as psychic battle rages up, down and all around the apartment block, ripping apart flesh and stone. The climax of the story features an incredible double-page spread shot: a close-up on Old Cho's terror-struck face done entirely with fine linework that is considered one of Otomo's finest illustrations ever.

David Scroggy, Dark Horse Comics' vice president for publishing, notes that *Domu* was one of the company's top sellers for 1995, selling close to twice as many copies as the average manga release despite also costing double the normal price. "It's a story that people like to pass along to others, especially people who haven't read much manga before," says *Domu* co-editor Peet Janes, echoing the very same response the Japanese had to the series in 1983. *Domu* was no less a turning point for Japanese comics in the '80s than Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* was for American comics in that same decade. It belongs in every manga fan's collection. W

Carl Horn wishes he had psychic powers, if only to say, "Give me money, booze and Mallomars."

F.Y.I.

Domu came out in 1995 from Dark Horse Comics in three 80-page square-bound issues for $5.95. The run is now available in a 240-page trade paperback collecting the three issues, available for $17.95, which includes three pages on Katsuhiro Otomo's career and creative theories compiled with the help of his American translator and Japanese editor. Although the covers of *Domu*'s American releases do not feature original art as such, they do feature original compositions based on art from the story that Otomo personally colorized for the American edition.



ANIME PICK OF THE MONTH

Black Jack

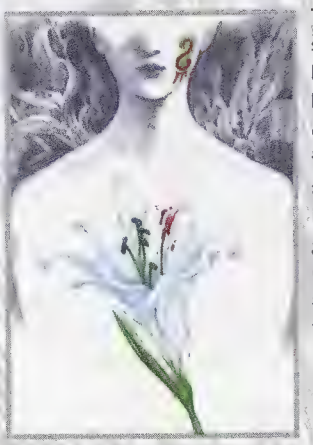
(U.S. Manga Corps, dubbed, 6 vols. of 50 min. ea., $19.95 ea., vols. 1-2 now available)

"Black Jack" is one of the darkest and hardest-hitting made-for-video series of recent years. This six-episode saga brings together two legendary creative forces: it is based on the comics by the Japanese "God of Manga" Osamu Tezuka (*Adolf*) and adapted to anime by the team of director Osamu Dezaki and key animator Akio Sugino ("The Professional: Golgo 13").

"Black Jack" is an unlicensed Japanese doctor, a man who wears with pride two colors on his scarred face and body—his skin covered with the grafts from a black friend that saved his life when he was severely burned as a youth. He is an outlaw surgeon, the man who can cure the incurable—a man hired by the desperate at death's door and who sometimes works for millions, but sometimes for free. In the "Black Jack" series, this medical mercenary travels the world encountering bizarre, barely believable illnesses, drawn from Tezuka's own research as a doctor, and walks the line between life and death himself as he crosses paths with superstitious mobs, drug-dealing gangsters and crooked politicians. A hard-boiled, adult drama, "BlackJack" comes highly recommended.

MANGA PICKS OF THE MONTH
Must-read manga books shipping in July

Blade of the Immortal: Dreamsong #1 (of 7)
Dark Horse



The immortality-cursed Manji seeks to free himself from life by slaying a thousand evil men, but what will he do when he confronts one beautiful, evil woman? This latest cycle in the stylish samurai violence of *Blade* introduces Makie, a stunning geisha killer. She's a lonely, deadly woman with no friends and no future, trapped in a profession she despises. The Immortal must slay her, but will his human side prove his undoing against Makie? *Blade* is suggested for mature readers.

Chirality #5
CPM Manga

Chirality #5 is written and drawn by Satoshi Urushihara, creator of the anime "Plastic Little" and "Legend of Lemnear"! In a near-future Earth, the planet is overrun by the "GM" technovirus, a mechanical parasite that attaches itself to the spines of its hosts. In this new story arc, a small band of survivors leaves their shelter and begins a dangerous trek to Alaska to seek out the GM control computer, Gaia. The issue features brand-new wraparound cover art by Urushihara—for mature readers only.

Drakuun: Rise of the Dragon Princess #6 (of 6)
Dark Horse

Johji Manabe (*Outlanders*, *Caravan Kidd*) has made a career out of drawing the adventures of scantily-clad blonde swordswomen, and he's not about to change his ways in this concluding issue! As Karula leads a charmed and delighted army to help free her captive sister from the Bosvanians, the fray is filled with cleavage and cleavers as a kamikaze squadron nears to blow them all to itsy-bitsy, teeny-weeny, yellow polka-dot pieces! *Drakuun* is suggested for mature readers.

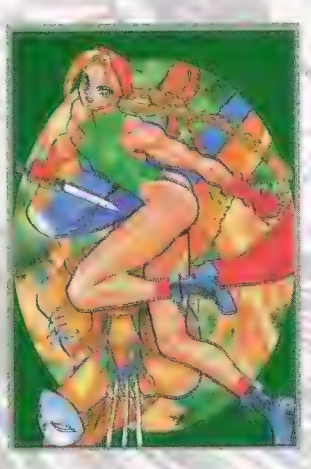
Grey Perfect Collection Vol. 2
Viz

The saga of the man called Grey Death concludes in this massive 296-page trade paperback. Grey meets a cyborg "halfling" which has survived all the long centuries since the end of the old world, and begins to learn from him the real nature of the system that has turned life on Earth into an endless wargame. Mortally wounded, Grey himself becomes absorbed into the machine. Can his rage for the truth carry him through to the final secret of the City? *Grey* is suggested for mature readers.

Mobile Police Patlabor #1
Viz

You've seen the "Patlabor" anime from Manga Entertainment and U.S. Manga Corps—now check out the manga by "Patlabor" co-creator Masami Yuki. With the near-future "Project Babylon" to drain Tokyo Bay and reclaim the land, came an explosion in the use of "Labors," powerful manned construction robots. The new phenomenon of "Labor crime" is met by the Tokyo Police's "Patrol Labor," or Patlabor squad. But if Labor crime is the disease, will the cure prove worse?

Super Street Fighter II: Cammy
Viz



This 192-page trade paperback is based on the hit video game! Twin-braided and beret-ed Cammy may be the cutest Street Fighter, but she'll still kick your butt! A top operative of the British Secret Service, yet haunted by amnesia, Cammy and USAF agent Guile infiltrate the "Battle Rave" fighting grounds of a lawless Mediterranean island in search of the sinister terrorist organization Shadowloo—and Cammy's past!

By Joyce M. Steel

The Wild and Marvelous Crossover in July

After the frenzy over last year's *Marvel versus DC Comics* series, Fleer/SkyBox is teaming up with WildStorm Studios to create another war of the universes! *Marvel vs. WildStorm* will be played out in 90 cards with original art by some of the companies' hottest creators. The basic set includes seven subsets including WildC.A.T.s vs. X-Men, StormWatch vs. Avengers and Gen[13] vs. Generation X! Chase cards include a parallel set of refractive Chromium cards (one card per every two packs, 1:2), a 90-card Acetate Chromium subset (1:8) and eight new OverPower CCG cards including the first four WildStorm character cards to be included in the game (1:6) (five cards per pack, suggested retail price $1.99).

TOPPING "STAR WARS"

Topps is teaming up with Top Cow on a new Star Wars set featuring every vehicle and contraption Luke, Han, Leia, Vader and Chewbacca ever rode to get from Planet A to Planet B. The *Star Wars Vehicles* series highlights all three films with front card art by the folks at Top Cow...including the title card drawn by Marc Silvestri himself. The first level of chase cards—four Cutaway Cards—are cooler than cool, with acetate overlays you can peel off to check what's under the hood! Two 3-D cards also chase the set; all chase cards are randomly inserted (five cards per pack, suggested retail $1.99).

HISTORICAL BABYLON

Fleer will release a special edition series (limited to 20,000 numbered boxes) based on TV's awesome sci-fi show, "Babylon 5." The 72-card "*Babylon 5*" retrospective focuses on "The Gathering" (pilot episode), the ships of the Earth Alliance and the ships of the Shadow War. Chasing the series are 36 trivia cards (1:1), 18 costume cards (1:2), eight Worlds of "Babylon 5" cards (1:6), four Faces of Delenn cards (1:12), one Hugo Award card (1:36), one "Babylon 5" Sculpted Hologram (1:180) and a Mira Furlan (Delenn) Autographed Card (1:720) (eight cards per pack, suggested retail $1.49).

FAVORITE IMAGES

Back on Earth, Comics Images plans a compilation series filled with art from some of its best licenses including The Brothers Hildebrandt, Frank Frazetta, Boris Vallejo, Drew Hayes and others. *Artist's Choice* has the artists themselves selecting their favorite art for the 72 cards, and talking about that art on the backs. Nine OmniChrome cards (1:18) and an unspecified number of randomly inserted Autographed cards chase the set (eight cards per pack, suggested retail $1.49).

THE TENTH TIME

The Tenth, one of Image Comics' eeriest creations, is getting its first card series from Krome Productions this fall. To prepare fans, Krome is putting out a preview series this month based on the Tony Daniels/Beau Smith comic. You'll get background info on *The Tenth* along with some original art from Daniels, in the seven-card set for $9.95. Plus, Daniels and Smith will each autograph 500 cards for random insertion.

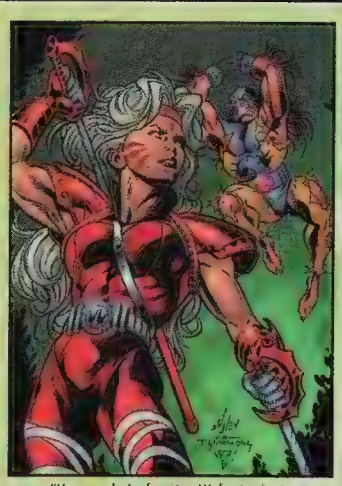
BOND OF TOMORROW

The third set in the Inkworks' *James Bond Connoisseur's Collection* focuses on the Bond flicks of the '80s and '90s, from "For Your Eyes Only" to "Goldeneye." The set includes a subset of rare behind-the-scenes stills from the earlier films *and* gives fans a sneak peek at "Tomorrow Never Dies," the next Bond film scheduled for release this Christmas. Bonus card sets include The Women of Bond, The Movie Posters of Bond and The Golden Touch of Bond (no published insertion rates) (007 cards per pack, suggested retail $1.99).

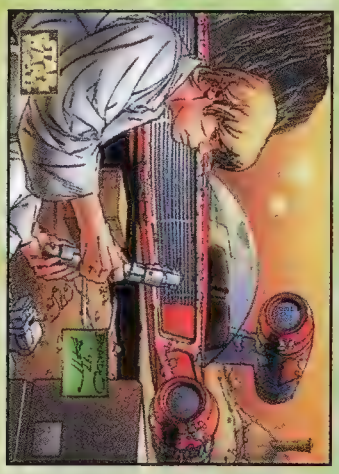
DISH FOR THE NEXT ISH...

August sizzles with a new Aliens/Predator set from a newcomer to the card scene and the rockin' return of KISS (yes, the band!) in a card set!

Joyce Steel tried out for the part of a Bond girl for the next Bond flick. She lost the part to Teri Hatcher. Go figure.



"Hey...who's throwing Wolverine action figures at me?"
Marvel vs. WildStorm cards



"What's this thing I found in Aunt Beru's underwear drawer? And why's it buzzing?"
Star Wars Vehicles series

"So I have this idea...a magazine for male adult dragons with centerfolds each issue..."
Artist's Choice cards

Yo Einstein, know the Q Equation?
Q = QUESADA, JOE QUESADA, THE BEST ARTIST IN COMICS
FX = SPECIAL EFFECTS: HIGH RES PHOTOGRAPHS OF MANHATTAN
Q+FX = 72 NEW CARDS THAT TECHNO-MAGICALLY MERGE JOE'S DRAWINGS OF MARVEL CHARACTERS WITH THE PHOTOS
=QFX™
MARVEL® PREMIUM QFX™
PUNISHER
DAREDEVIL
Got it? Good. Now get a haircut relativity boy.
MARVEL PREMIUM QFX™
IT EQUATES IN JUNE
Fleer SkyBox International
KEEPING CARDS COOL
Marvel, all Marvel characters and the distinctive likenesses therof: TM and © 1997 Marvel Characters, Inc. All rights reserved.
Marvel Premium QFX TM Fleer/SkyBox International. Produced and distributed by Fleer/Skybox International.

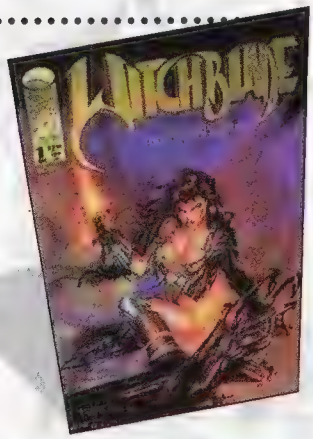
***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are June's hottest back issues.**

TOP 10 COMICS

1. JLA #1

WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

Green. That's what *JLA* #1 has going for it. The color green. For starters, just look at the characters. Martian Manhunter is green. Green Lantern, quite naturally, is also green. Aquaman has them green tights going on, and occasionally is said to be a little green around the gills. The cover itself is a wonderful shade of green. The issue itself is going for a fair amount of greenbacks, as a quick check of our wild and woolly price guide will show you. And fans from coast to coast who didn't latch on to a copy are green with envy. Yeah, green. That's where it's at, baby. **LAST MONTH: 2**



2. WITCHBLADE #1

WRITERS: David Wohl, Brian Haberlin and Christina Z.
ARTISTS: Michael Turner and D-Tron

Hey! It's the ol' one-two shuffle! Last month, *Witchblade* #1 was on top and *JLA* #1 came in the two-hole. This month, it's a little vice-versa action. Which leads us to ask: If this were dancin', what would it look like? Sara Pezzini and Superman doing a fox trot? Maybe Witchy-Poo and Flash dancin' the lambada, the forbidden dance? Or maybe Wonder Woman dancing with Witchblade? Yeah, we could see that. Chicks always dance with other chicks. One thing is for sure: *Witchblade* #1 has been doing the hippy-hippy shake at the top of this list for quite some time now. **LAST MONTH: 1**

3. DARKCHYLDE #1

WRITER: Randy Queen
ARTISTS: Randy Queen, Jason Gorder and Marlo Alquiza

NUMBER THREE

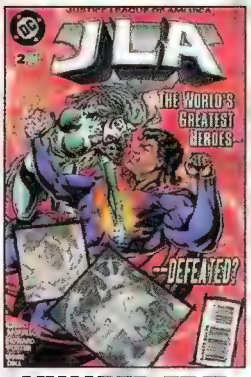
She's tiny! She's toony! She's just a little loony! Yeah, she's Darkchylde, and as cool as "Tiny Toon Adventures" may be, we think it would be better if Ms. Ariel Chylde was one of the Tiny Toons. Picture this: Furball (he's the mini-Sylvester the Cat-type) gets his tail caught in the door. Darkchylde tries to help him get unstuck, but panics and channels some brimstone-stinkin', fire-breathin', demon-thing. The demon eats Furball. We see a "TV-M" rating all over this. **LAST MONTH: 4**

NUMBER FOUR

4. THE DARKNESS #1 (BLACK VARIANT COVER)

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTISTS: Marc Silvestri and Batt

Hey! It's the ol' three-four shuffle! Y'see, last month, *The Darkness* #1 was...ah, never mind. We did that routine already. Anyhow, it seems like darned near anything Garth Ennis touches turns to gold these days. It also seems that practically anything by Top Cow turns to gold, too. Put those two together and you get one monster hit. Let's just hope this title has enough steam to keep it going through Garth's six-month vacation from the book. He just got engaged, y'see. Gotta plan a wedding and stuff. **LAST MONTH: 3**



NUMBER FIVE

5. JLA #2

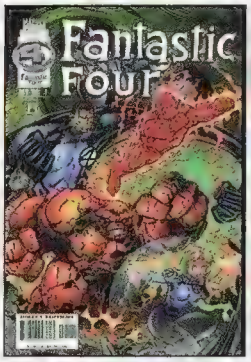
WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

'Bout time someone at DC woke up and smelled the toast. Try this on for size: The Justice League America lineup, circa 1984: Martian Manhunter, Vibe (Who?), Gypsy (Double who?), Steel (Not Shaquille O'Steel, but an earlier, cheesier version), Vixen (Who again?) and Zatanna (nice fishnets). The title was canceled due to—small wonder—low sales. Today's JLA? Oh, there's Superman, Batman, Green Lantern and the Flash. Now it's a runaway hit. It's all in the players you put on the field, boys. **LAST MONTH: 9**

6. FANTASTIC FOUR #1

WRITERS: Jim Lee and Brandon Choi
ARTISTS: Jim Lee and Scott Williams

What's old is new again and what's new again is going to be old again soon. We think. At least that looks like the general upshot of the whole "Heroes Reborn/Heroes Return" hoo-hah. The project was controversial, but it did at least one thing—it made people read and actually care about *Fantastic Four* for the first time since about...oh...since about issue #129 or so. Yesirree, Bob. *Fantastic Four* was the shining light of "Heroes Reborn" and fans are still scrambling after this issue. **LAST MONTH: 7**



NUMBER SIX

NUMBER SEVEN

7. ASTRO CITY (VOL. 1) #6

WRITER: Kurt Busiek
ARTIST: Brent Anderson

It's like this: Every day, more and more people turn on to *Astro City*, the big ensemble-cast superhero title. The toughest issue for the Federated Fanboys of American to get their clammy meathooks on? This one right here. Y'see, this was the last issue of the first series, and orders had tapered off from the always-big #1 levels, and hadn't got to the hot-dammit-this-is-pretty-good-stuff-so-you-oughta-read-it increase. It's a durned tough issue to get. **LAST MONTH: NOT RANKED**

8. WITCHBLADE #10 (DARKNESS #0 VARIANT COVER)

WRITERS: David Wohl and Christina Z.
ARTISTS: Marc Silvestri, Michael Turner, D-Tron and Batt

Witchblade #10 (or *The Darkness* #0, as many people like to call it) features the two top characters Top Cow has going wrapped into one issue. It's also the lead-in to the hyper-successful *Darkness* series. Is it any wonder it's one o' the most coveted back issues going today? Didn't think so. Word to the wise: Keep your eyes peeled (as disgusting a concept as that may be) for this fall's Darkness/Witchblade crossover. It gets rolling in *Witchblade* #17. **LAST MONTH: 5**

NUMBER EIGHT

NUMBER NINE

9. BODY BAGS #1

WRITER: Jason Pearson
ARTIST: Jason Pearson

For those of you who either weren't here last month or have no short-term memory to speak of, allow us to reiterate: *Body Bags* is a hyper-violent story of family values. It's basically a warm 'n' fuzzy tale of a father and a daughter. Only thing is, Daddy's a professional killer, and by the time we get to the end of a four-issue mini-series, daddy's little girl is doing pretty well in the family trade herself. There's shootings, stabbings, lacerations and contusions galore! Fun for the whole family! **LAST MONTH: 8**

10. PREACHER #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTIST: Steve Dillon

Looking for something a little edgy? A bit provocative? Something chock-full o' booze, vampires, explosions, knife wounds and the occasional rude treatment of armadillos? Then look no farther than *Preacher*, my friend. This wonderful tale of sin and redemption, betrayal and friendship and tequila and lime has turned out to be quite the hit. Heck, more than two years after its release, *Preacher* #1 is still one of the most coveted issues West of the Pecos. That's the mark of a title that's here to stay. **LAST MONTH: 6**

NUMBER TEN

THE NEXT TEN

THE NEXT 10 HOT BOOKS AND THE COMPANIES THAT MAKE THEM

11. WITCHBLADE #2 IMAGE
12. SUPERGIRL #1 DC
13. HITMAN #1 DC
14. IRON MAN #1 MARVEL
15. THE SHADOW #1 DC
16. RESURRECTION MAN #1 DC
17. FANTASTIC FOUR #2 MARVEL
18. DARKCHYLDE #3 MAXIMUM
19. IRON MAN #4 (CHRISTMAS COVER) #1 MARVEL
20. ASTRO CITY (VOL. 2) #1 IMAGE

MARKET WATCH

COMIC MARKET NEWS AND SUCH · by Lars Pearson

'FLASHBACK MONTH' HAS MIXED RESULTS

Alpha Flight and *Daredevil* were among the more succesful "Flashback" issues

In May, comic fans entered a love-hate affair. But whether fans loved Marvel's "Flashback Month" or hated it, lower retailer orders make it tough to call the month-long event a success.

"Flashback Month" featured stories taking place right before Marvel's core superheroes became heroes. The stories ran through all Marvel's main titles.

The readers who "loved" the Minus 1 issues appreciated the 1960s-style cover designs and interior art, the stories of days-gone-by and the fact the flashbacks were a nice break from current storylines.

But get this: Some readers saw "Flashback Month" as a chance to save moolah and *skip buying comics for a month*. Many of the books weren't closely tied to the current stories, so fans figured they wouldn't be missing anything. Also, if ignored, the Minus 1 issue numbers wouldn't break a collector's run on a title. The end result: sales on most titles either held steady or *went down*.

A few key books, however, did well. *Daredevil* sales shot up, which retailers attribute to long-time DD artist Gene Colan returning to the book. *Alpha Flight* sold out in many stores, probably because fans are gearing up for the new series drawn by former WildStorm penciler Scott Clark (*StormWatch*), whose art is prominently shown in promo ads. And *Uncanny X-Men* might be the sleeper of the bunch, given that its story co-starred a character who is hinted to be Bastion and dealt with his possible connection to the Sentinels Nimrod and Master Mold.

DC Heroes Ride 'JLA' Coattails

By now, everyone should know that one of the hottest titles out there is *JLA*, DC's supergroup starring its best and brightest heroes. The series is so red-hot, DC's starting to enjoy fringe benefits, since *JLA* readers are looking at other books about JLA characters. Some readers who haven't kept up with Aquaman (who's sporting a new, hairy, pissed-off look these days) are now wondering what's going on in his book. Others are wondering why Green Lantern is a new character, since they only remember the current GL's predecessor, Hal Jordan. Result: *Aquaman* and *Green Lantern* are gaining muscle.

Wonder Woman and *Flash* are also showing smaller increases. *JLA* doesn't seem to be helping *Batman* much, since his books are driven by much stronger publicity such as the upcoming "Batman & Robin" movie.

At left: Aquaman's presence in *JLA* is helping his own book

Opposite: Thanks to a movie and cartoon, *Spawn* is topping the charts once again

Strangely enough, fans of Grant Morrison's *JLA* writing is generating higher sales for his more bloody and surreal DC/Vertigo title, *The Invisibles*. And there's a lot of back-issue activity for his *Animal Man* work (#1-#26) and some call for his *Doom Patrol* issues (#19-#63). But, so far, not any unusual demand for his issues of *Spawn* (#16-#18) has been recorded—at least not because of Morrison since #18 is already rare. And speaking of which…

Spawn's Scorching

He's crusty! He's savage! He's Spawny-guy, and his sales are rolling up the charts like the fires of Hell.

Not only is *Spawn* at the top of the sales charts again (it was the top selling book for May), sales on the spin-off *Curse of the Spawn* are up a whopping 50 percent (which is surprising, since *Curse* isn't directly tied to current *Spawn* storylines).

There are a couple of reasons for this: HBO just debuted the new "Spawn" cartoon in May, which heightened Spawn's profile. There's also been promos hyping the upcoming movie, not to mention that people are realizing that *Spawn* issues from the #20s and #30s are scarce since sales had slumped and retailers ordered less copies. The feeding frenzy to get those issues has helped re-ignite interest in the new comics, and for now, *Spawn* the comic (much like the Spawny-guy himself) is smokin'. W

Lars Pearson is happy to report that Lars Pearson # *Minus 1 was a tremendous seller in France.*

Wizard's Top 10 Writers

1 Garth Ennis
Hitman, Preacher

2 Mark Waid
Ka-Zar, Flash

3 Peter David
Aquaman, Supergirl

4 Scott Lobdell
Uncanny X-Men

5 Kurt Busiek
Astro City

6 Grant Morrison
JLA

7 Frank Miller
Sin City

8 Erik Larsen
Savage Dragon

9 David Wohl
Witchblade

10 James Robinson
Starman, Cable

Wizard's Top 10 Artists*

1 Joe Madureira
Uncanny X-Men

2 Jim Lee
Fantastic Four

3 Michael Turner
Witchblade

4 J. Scott Campbell
Gen13

5 Joe Quesada
Ash

6 Carlos Pacheco
X-Men

7 Marc Silvestri
The Darkness

8 Andy Kubert
Ka-Zar

9 Alex Ross
Uncle Sam

10 Adam Kubert
Incredible Hulk

*** Pencilers and painters**

***Wizard*'s Top Ten Professionals lists are derived from a nationwide retailer survey.**

Buried Treasure

Showcase '96 #8

Hubba-hubba! One of the formerly feeble DC characters who's soared up the sales charts lately is Supergirl, that siren of steel who's been rewritten as something of a (literal) angel by fan-fave writer Peter David. But a nugget that's not so well known is that David penned a prelude story that appeared in *Showcase '96 #8* a month before the current *Supergirl* series. *Supergirl* readers, who've come to expect emotionally-grappling tales from David, would love this puppy if they knew about it, 'cause the story's got Superbabe realizing she can't be everywhere and having to save either a pregnant mother or an injured priest. The fact that *Showcase* was never a sales barn-burner anyway means there are *wayyyyy* fewer copies of this around than Supergirl fans would like, and makes this ish a real sleeper. ■ *LP*

WIZARD TOP 100

The highest-ordered comic books for the month of MAY.

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by Diamond Comic Distributors, the following is a listing of the highest-ordered comics for May. Check out the column on the right for an explanation of this month's standout books (listed in **boldface type**).

1. **Spawn #62 (Image)**
2. Uncanny X-Men Minus 1 (Marvel)
3. X-Men Minus 1 (Marvel)
4. Fantastic Four #9 (Marvel)
5. **Curse of the Spawn #9 (Image)**
6. Wolverine Minus 1 (Marvel)
7. Iron Man #9 (Marvel)
8. **Captain America #9 (Marvel)**
9. Avengers #9 (Marvel)
10. Generation X Minus 1 (Marvel)
11. **JLA #7 (DC)**
12. **X-Man Minus 1 (Marvel)**
13. Gen^{13} #19 (Image)
14. X-Factor Minus 1 (Marvel)
15. X-Force Minus 1 (Marvel)
16. Cable Minus 1 (Marvel)
17. Tales of the Witchblade #2 (Image)
18. **Gen^{13} Annual #1 (Image)**
19. Excalibur Minus 1 (Marvel)
20. Amazing Spider-Man Minus 1 (Marvel)
21. **Superman #125 (DC)**
22. Incredible Hulk Minus 1 (Marvel)
23. Action Comics #735 (DC)
24. Adventures of Superman #548 (DC)
25. Superman: The Man of Steel #69 (DC)
26. Peter Parker: Spider-Man Minus 1 (Marvel)
27. Spectacular Spider-Man Minus 1 (Marvel)
28. Sensational Spider-Man Minus 1 (Marvel)
29. Deadpool Minus 1 (Marvel)
30. Star Wars: Dark Force Rising #1 (D.H.)
31. Batman #544 (DC)
32. Gen^{13} Bootleg #7 (Image)
33. **Superman Annual #9 (DC)**
34. Beast #3 (Marvel)
35. Detective Comics #711 (DC)
36. Batman: The Long Halloween #8 (DC)
37. Supergirl #11 (DC)
38. The X-Files #30 (Topps)
39. **Heroes for Hire #1 (Marvel)**
40. Batman Annual #21 (DC)
41. Darkchylde: The Diary #1 (Image)
42. Green Lantern #88 (DC)
43. WildC.A.T.s #38 (Image)
44. Thunderbolts #4 (Marvel)
45. **Alpha Flight: In the Beginning... (Marvel)**
46. Preacher #27 (DC)
47. **Arcanum #3 (Image)**
48. Elektra Minus 1 (Marvel)
49. Thunderbolts: Distant Rumblings Minus 1 (Marvel)
50. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #96 (DC)
51. **Batman: Batgirl (DC)**
52. Nightwing #10 (DC)
53. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #64 (DC)
54. DV8 #8 (Image)
55. Batman: Bane (DC)
56. Batman: Poison Ivy (DC)
57. Ka-Zar #3 (Marvel)
58. Batman: Mr. Freeze (DC)
59. Unknown Soldier #4 (DC)
60. **Untold Tales of Spider-Man Minus 1 (Marvel)**
61. Catwoman #47 (DC)
62. Robin #43 (DC)
63. The Flash #127 (DC)
64. Silver Surfer Minus 1 (Marvel)
65. The Tenth #4 (Image)
66. Nightwing Annual #1 (DC)
67. Daredevil Minus 1 (Marvel)
68. What If? Minus 1 (Marvel)
69. Wonder Woman #123 (DC)
70. Batman Chronicles #9 (DC)
71. Venom: Seed of Darkness (Marvel)
72. Ka-Zar: Sibling Rivalry (Marvel)
73. S. Wars: X-Wing R.S.—Req. for a Rogue #2 (D.H.)
74. **Pride & Joy #1 (DC)**
75. Journey into Mystery Minus 1 (Marvel)
76. Untold Tales of Spider-Man '97 (Marvel)
77. Weapon Zero #13 (Image)
78. Venom: License to Kill #2 (Marvel)
79. Wonder Woman Annual #6 (DC)
80. Azrael #31 (DC)
81. Judgment Day Alpha (Maximum)
82. Chastity #3 (Chaos!)
83. Conan #1 (Marvel)
84. Hellshock #5 (Image)
85. **Evil Ernie: Destroyer! #1 (Chaos!)**
86. Silver Surfer '97 (Marvel)
87. The Maxx #30 (Image)
88. Aquaman #34 (DC)
89. The Dreaming #14 (DC)
90. Impulse #27 (DC)
91. Teen Titans #10 (DC)
92. Starman #32 (DC)
93. WetWorks #29 (Image)
94. Superboy #41 (DC)
95. Weird War Tales #2 (DC)
96. Hitman #16 (DC)
97. **Legionnaires #50 (DC)**
98. Aquaman Annual #3 (DC)
99. Classic S. Wars: Han Solo at Stars' End #3 (D.H.)
100. Savage Dragon #39 (Image)

AT THE TOP:

Image's Spawn Month was a super-successful monster. The story of Spawn becoming Al Simmons for a day catapulted *Spawn* to the #1 position for the first time since issue #50, as the tie-in *Curse of the Spawn*'s major Angela spotlight gave that book a sales-doubling push. Although books like *X-Man* had chart jumps, the sales for Marvel's Minus 1 set were actually lower than usual, because people didn't see these fun flashbacks as mega-important must-buys. "Reborn" hero Captain America rejoined the other "HR" books in the Top 10, possibly because people wanted to try out his new creative team, James Robinson and Joe Bennett. We've noted its market power before, but *JLA* has now officially become DC's biggest ongoing title in years—it's beaten many X-books and *Gen^{13}*, and the Top 10 looks to be its next stop.

IN THE MIDDLE:

Not surprisingly, the *Gen^{13} Annual* did much better than *Gen^{13} Bootleg*; the annual featured art by *Preacher*'s Steve Dillon, while the latter seems to be losing more steam each month because J. Scott Campbell's *not* drawing it. The Supertitles are cruising along (especially *Superman* itself); readers are very interested in the hero's sizable change, even if they don't particularly like it. The first of DC's '97 "Pulp Heroes" annuals fared pretty well (with Superman's leading the pack), thanks to the bulk of 'em being set in current continuity for the first time in years. The theme was interesting, and even though many of today's young readers only know "pulp" as a juice ingredient, the books' success proves the theme was marketable. *Heroes for Hire* and *Alpha Flight: ITB* both scored strongly for returning-hero books. *Arcanum* is doing phenomenally—with a 73% sales leap this month—as fans grab for the next possible Top Cow hit.

IN THE SECOND HALF:

Batman: Batgirl beat out the other three "Batman & Robin" movie-celebrating one-shots, which sends DC a signal that fans want to see more of Batgirl—whether she's Barbara Gordon or someone new. May's *Untold Tales of Spider-Man* Minus 1 bettered the book's standard sales by 10%—art by long-time Spidey penciler John Romita Sr. helped, and the flashback theme worked perfectly for the, well, flashback title! DC's dark drama *Pride & Joy*'s sales benefited from the ever-busy Garth Ennis' writing. *Evil Ernie: Destroyer!* kicked off what's supposed to be a major story, while the Shrinking Violet/Mordru wedding tying up a year-long story brought more spectators to *Legionnaires*.

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If you're a retailer who would like to participate in our compiling of the *Wizard* Top 100 (and be a candidate for special prizes), please write to us at the address below.

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resource page

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c/o Wizard Press
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Attn: Bob Marshall

survey: issue 72

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & CONCERNS

We want to know what you like about this li'l mag of ours. Tell us what you thought about this particular issue of *WIZARD*, what you liked best, and what sucked sour frog-ass. (Use extra paper if you're one of them long-winded types.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

PRICE CHANGES

Are books selling in your area for a lot more or a lot less than *WIZARD* is listing them at? If they are, we wanna know. List any major discrepancies you feel exist in the *WIZARD* price guide. (Use extra paper if necessary.)

Title	Issue #	What it sells for in your area

TOP TEN HOTTEST COMICS

What do you see as the hottest comics among the circle of friends you hang out with? List them below, with the hottest book at the number one slot.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS

Who is your favorite comic book artist? Actually, we wanna know who your top 10 favorite artists are. List your favorite artist in the number one slot, followed by your second favorite artist, etc.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

TOP TEN HOTTEST WRITERS

Hang in there; we're almost done. What we need now is the list of your 10 favorite comic book writers. You know the drill: your favorite in pole position, with your second favorite at number two, yadda, yadda, yadda.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

let your voice be heard

WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

We need your help. Y'see, the only way to keep improving the WIZARD price guide is to keep in touch with the thousands of comic book fans that make this industry what it is. So, we need you to take a couple of minutes and fill out the survey on the left and mail this page to us. And heck, by helping us make a better mag, you'll *get* a better mag! (See? It all works out in the end.) Oh, and feel free to photocopy this page if you don't feel like destroying this issue.

WHO ARE YOU?

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_____
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_____
City State

_____
Zip Age

_____
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WIZARD #73
WHAT ARE THE TOP 10 COOLEST SUPERHERO COSTUMES OF ALL TIME?
SIN CITY
1/2 OFFER AND ALTERNATE COVER BY FRANK MILLER!
WOLVERINE COVER BY CARLOS PACHECO
FREE
Darkchylde
Chromium Card!

BULL PEN

Former Mort of the Month Roy Raymond welcomes you to the Miscellaneous *Wizard* Fun Section

C.B.I.Q.

Games, puzzles and stuff that'll tickle your tummy with the taste of nuts and honey

comic book intelligence quotient

Hey, fatbodies! If you think you're getting out of this month's "CBIQ" exercise, then you'd better think again. Your knowledge of the useless will be matched against some of fattest comic characters with silly names. The more points you get, the more you'll realize that reading comics and eating Cheetos will probably get you more bouts of angina than dates with women.

Score	Rank
0-4	**Big Bertha.** Whaddayamean you haven't heard of Big Bertha? She's only the fattest member of the Great Lakes Avengers. Waitaminnit…who the hell are the Great Lakes Avengers.
5-14	**Bouncing Boy.** Someone this fat shouldn't be able to bounce.
15-19	**Allfather D'Aronique from *Preacher*.** And speaking of non-bouncing fat bastards…
20	**The Blob.** When you name your child the Blob, odds are there'll be a certain amount of lost self-esteem that can only be replaced by buckets and buckets of fried chicken.

1. When the powerful Proctor and the Gatherers revealed themselves to be alternate-reality versions of the Avengers, which "mighty assembler" was Proctor's other-dimensional doppelganger?
A) Wonder Man
B) Black Knight
C) Captain America
D) Dr. Druid

2. In the pre-Crisis DC Universe, how did Superman gain entrance into his Fortress of Solitude?
A) He punched in a code from his remote monitor that only he and Jimmy Olsen knew.
B) He used a secret cave entrance that took him to the underground lair.
C) Because there were no doors, he had to vibrate at superspeed to pass through the ice and rock.
D) He used a really huge super-key to unlock the door.

3. During World War II, Hitler sought out the genius of one Victor Von Doom. What were the single-testicled dictator's plans for Doom?
A) He was to bring Thor and other Nordic gods from Asgard to fight for the Nazis.
B) He was Baron Zemo's young assistant/lab boy.
C) He was to create an army of killer androids for a planned invasion of England.
D) Though he was a scientific genius and dabbler in magic, Doom also happened to be one heck of a masseur, and worked wonders on *der Fuhrer*'s lumbago.

4. Whose brain resides in the head of the Savage Dragon's foe, Brainiape?
A) Rasputin, the Mad Monk
B) Adolf Hitler, *der* Mad *Fuhrer*
C) Ed Gein, the Mad Cannibal
D) Frank Einstein, the Mad Man

5. Zealot has not had a romantic relationship with:
A) Soldier.
B) Grifter.
C) John Colt.
D) WarBlade.

6. Before Emma Frost became one of the co-educators of Generation X, what teen team did the lingerie-garbed telepath help found?
A) the New Mutants
B) the Resistants
C) the Hellions
D) the Newsboy Legion

7. Where did the current Hawkman's wings come from?
A) He found them while he was on an archeological dig in Egypt.
B) He grows them out of his back.
C) They were issued to him when he was a police officer on the planet of Thanagar.
D) When the Hawkgod died, he gave them to Katar Hol.

8. When the magically babelicious Zatanna does her magic thing, what is unique about her incantations?
A) She recites her spells backwards.
B) She rhymes her incantations, much like Samantha Stevens of "Bewitched."
C) She must use specific hand gestures with each incantation.
D) Her spells usually come out as dirty limericks.

9. What is the dark secret of Astro City's shadowy crimefighter known as the Confessor?
A) He's actually a vampire.
B) Before he became a guilt-ridden superhero, he was once a mafia hitman who was so ruthless, he even waxed his own mother.
C) As a priest, he once experimented with black magic, resulting in the deaths of his whole congregation.
D) He and Altar Boy do not wear pants underneath their robes.

10. Who never did a crossover with the Archie gang?
A) Punisher
B) Grunge from Gen[13]
C) Sabrina the Teenage Witch
D) Hellboy

11. In the Marvel Universe, what is the name of legion of superheroes that protects the intergalactic Shi'ar Empire?
A) Galactic Guardians
B) Imperial Guard
C) Starjammers
D) the Black Hole Jammers

12. This new JLA recruit died during her first adventure with the team:
A) Silver Sorceress.
B) Artemis.
C) Tomorrow Woman.
D) Yesterday Lass.

13. When Spider-Man first encountered the ape-like Gibbon, what strange favor did the monkey-boy ask of ol' Webhead?
A) He wanted Spider-Man to help him free his simian brethren from the Bronx Zoo.
B) He wanted to be Spidey's partner.
C) He asked Spidey to give him a job reference as a security guard at a zoo.
D) He wanted Spidey to play an accordion while he held a tin cup and danced.

14. In the campy '60s "Batman" movie based on the campy "Batman" TV series, who played Catwoman?
A) Julie Newmar
B) Eartha Kitt
C) Lee Meriwether
D) Phyllis Diller

15. Who single-handedly destroyed the entire planet of Mars in the mini-series *Mars Attacks* Image?
A) Mighty Man
B) Spawn
C) Savage Dragon
D) The Darkness

16. Remember Agatha Harkness? Y'know, the witchy hag/nanny of Franklin Storm? Well, what's the name of her furry feline familiar?
A) Midnight
B) Lucifer
C) Ebony
D) Morris

17. Which mutant freak died in a battle with Grotesk while impersonating Professor X?
A) Mimic
B) Morph
C) Changeling
D) Trik'ldik, the adorable teen mutant Skrull

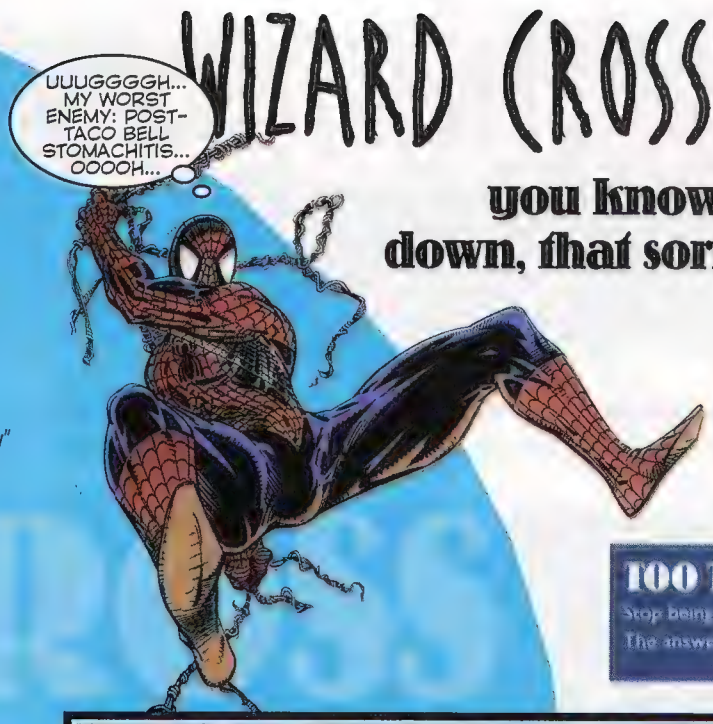
18. Whose personality and memory is locked within the mind of the android known as Spartan?
A) John Colt, leader of Team One
B) Lord Yon Kahl
C) an ancient Kherubim warrior
D) all of the above

19. Which superheroine recently moved in with Green Lantern?
A) Power Girl
B) Jade
C) Darkstar
D) M.O.D.A.M.

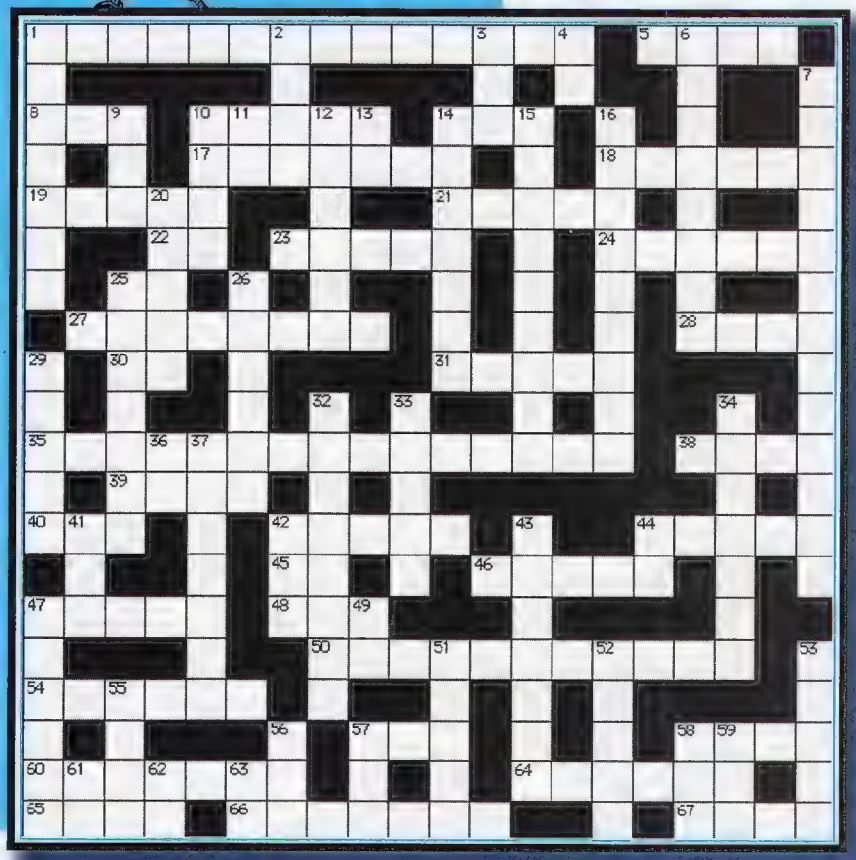
20. In "Return of the Jedi," how did Boba Fett apparently meet his end?
A) He was blasted by Han Solo.
B) He was crushed by Jabba the Hutt's party barge when it crashed.
C) He fell into the mouth of a giant sand creature.
D) When he was trying to fix the ion engine of his spacecraft, his Gilligan-like assistant thought he said "Launch," when he really said, "How's about some lunch?", thus humorously frying the bounty hunter and scattering his atoms throughout the galaxy.

WIZARD CROSSWORD

you know, across, down, that sort of stuff



TOO TOUGH?
Stop being a pansy!
The answers are on page 206



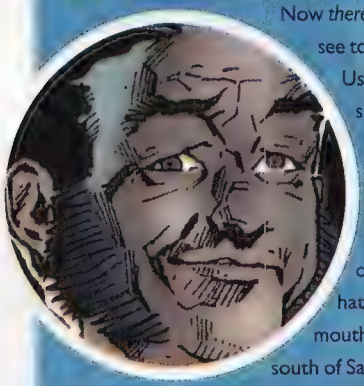
1. 22 Brides' solo-series member
5. Flash foe _____ Kadabra
8. Diamond ___
10. Deadman was originally _____
14. member of Royal Flush gang
17. Barry Allen's grandson
18. a lame Batman action figure
19. Iron Man's dead pal
21. Matter-Eater Lad has powerful ones
22. original Atom, __ Pratt
23. Morpheus' favorite thing
24. giant ape with Kryptonite vision
25. 10-part 1995 Image X-over; initials
27. Wayne's weapon
28. stern JLA member's homeworld
30. DC's winged wonder; init.
31. "The _____ of Superman"
35. Homer Simpson's boss
38. Mr. Terrific, "Defender of ____ Play"
39. Sandman's squeeze ____ Belmont
40. Legion story "End of an ___"
42. Hawkeye's first name
44. evil-filled *Preacher* organization
45. *The Books* ___ *Magic*
46. Man of the Atom
47. "Hulk _____!"
48. Black Canary uses this
50. Black Widow's dead husband
54. Vampirella's mom
57. HYDRA's tech men
58. Freedom Fighter, the Human ____
60. Legion foe; the Emerald _____
64. Bruce's butler
65. "_____ in peace, Hal Jordan."
66. Reggie's rival's best buddy
67. original Human Torch's sidekick

1. female WetWorker
2. Batroc can do this
3. war hero Enemy ___
4. Razor's publisher; init.
6. Banshee's bro
7. *Savage Dragon* crime syndicate
9. Curt Connors' workplace
10. Maxx and Thor writer
11. presented Hal Jordan's funeral; init.
12. giant, Jewish JLAer
13. *Stray Bullets* creator; init.
14. Orin was his mentor
15. the Ultimate _____
16. Pym _____ shrink people
20. Adam Strange's homeworld
25. Black Panther's country
26. Fin Fang Foom is one
29. forced to kill Shi
32. Sebastian Shaw's club
33. Dark Claw villain
34. Starfire's planet
36. Black Lightning writer; init.
37. last Guardian
41. Marvel Spaceknight
42. Man-Eating or Top
43. Avenger robot
44. flaming "Hulk" guest-star; init.
47. Surfer, Swan or Sable
49. brings The Darkness to light; init.
51. Hulk's power source
52. New Universe book *The* _____
53. Backlash's gal pal
55. Poison Ivy's lethal weapon
56. Johnny Storm's college
57. "hot" Event hero
58. Spidey foe Chance likes to ____
59. "Star Trek: DS9" shapeshifter
61. "__ am Bizarro!"
62. new Hourman; init.
63. played Flash Gordon; init.

TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS OF THE MONTH

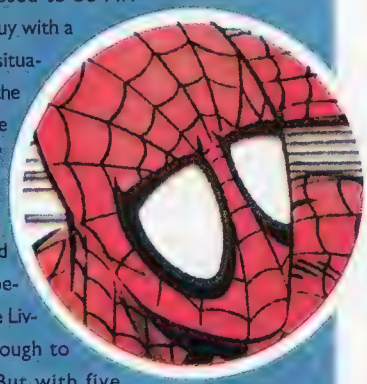
This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1) WOLVERINE



Now *there's* something you don't see too often: Happy Wolvie. Usually Wolverine's got a serious mean going on. Most o' the time, he's all pumped up and ready to go off on some would-be world-conqueror, some mutant hater or just some loud-mouth at a dive bar a little bit south of Saskatoon. But here, he's lookin' all happy. Wonder why. Maybe those are chopsticks in his hand and he's eatin' some good sushi. Maybe he's happy 'cause he actually has a nose in this panel. Maybe he knows that sideburns are "in" again, and he's all fashionable 'n' stuff. Or maybe he just knows he's the most popular comic character going.

2) SPIDER-MAN



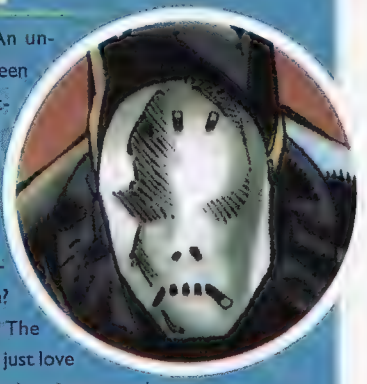
Now *there's* something you don't see too often: Sad Spidey. Isn't Spider-Man supposed to be Mr. Happy-Go-Lucky? The guy with a quip and a joke in any situation? Yeah, that's usually the way it is. But things have been rough for the ol' web-slinger recently. After all, Doc Ock is back in the house and Spidey just had to go toe-to-fang with Morbius, the Living Vampire. That's enough to wear anyone down. But with five monthly titles (Five!), a hyper-popular cartoon show and his mug plastered on everything from coffee cups to Underoos, you'd think Petey could get a little happy, don'tcha?

3) SPAWN

"Rrrraaaggh! Me am Monkey-Spawn! Me am bizarre amalgamation of Cy-Gor and Spawn! Maybe me get drawn like this for a few issues and you buy new action figure! Rrrraaaggh! Gimme banana!"

Yeah, Spawn is better than the Chameleon when it comes to being the Man of 1,000 Faces. In his career, he's looked like Al Simmons, a "traditional" Spawn, the ever-meaty "hamburger head" Spawn, Medieval Spawn and the overhyped "new-face Spawn" they rolled out in *Spawn* #50. This guy goes through faces like babies go through diapers. But for some reason, no matter what he looks like, fanboys dig him *mucho*.

4) BATMAN



Yowza! What's this? An unplanned crossover between "Pulp Fiction" and Batman? Is Bats gonna give up chasing down the Joker and instead go after the Gimp? Isn't the notion of Batman meeting Gen[13] stupid enough?

Maybe, maybe not. The fine folks at DC Comics just love to send Bats to other comic universes and "Elseworlds" aplenty for one big reason: He's the most marketable long-john-wearin', crimefightin', secret identity-packin' guy they got. So you'll see Bats not only in his four monthly titles (and a quarterly), but also linked up with the Aliens, Predator, Spider-Man and anyone tougher than Richie Rich.

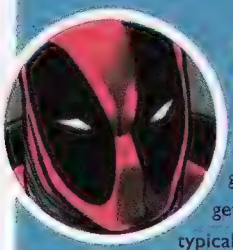
5) WITCHBLADE

In a perfect world, all women would look like they were drawn by Michael Turner. Unfortunately, our world is filled with "Baked Lays" chips that taste like Styrofoam, flooding rivers and Republicans. Therefore, anyone can see that our world is not perfect.

So we have to settle for just one woman who looks like she's drawn by Michael Turner (she looks that way 'cause she *is* drawn by him): Witchblade. Think Witchy's popular? You're right. Think Mr. Turner's got a lot to do with that? Right again.

6) THE DARKNESS

Geez, Louise! This guy just *drips* evil! Check it out: Jackie Estacado is a hitman. A professional killer. That's a nasty profession, and at least one step lower than being an editor on some self-styled "Guide to Comics." Add to that the fact that this "Darkness" power itself is 100% concentrated evil *and* the fact that Jackie's written by Garth Ennis, and you get a guy who'd be less trustworthy as a baby-sitter than Charles Manson. Bad, bad man.

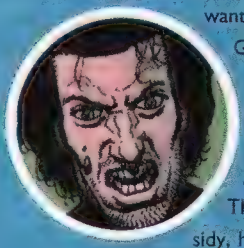


7) DEADPOOL

Damn, but that Deadpool guy sure has a big mouth. He's always flappin' his gums, which any fanboy can tell you can get you into trouble. But whereas your typical comic geek is only going to get his underwear yanked up the crack of his ass by talking too much, Deadpool usually has to deal with more...extreme consequences. Like tangling with the Hulk, f'r example. But it's Deadpool's big yap, along with his book's funky Ed McGuinness art style, that endears him to fans everywhere.

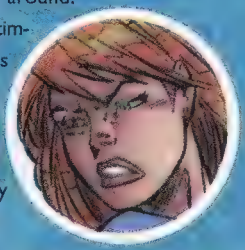
8) PREACHER

Speaking of being an endearing character, Jesse Custer ain't one. Heck, he's got practically everyone you can think of wanting to take a piece out of his hide. The Grail, that double-secret religious organization, wants him dead. So does the Texas Highway Patrol. Even Heaven wants to put him in his place. And his girlfriend, Tulip, is pretty miffed at him. The only ones on Preacher's side? Cassidy, his drunken Irish vampire buddy, and the legions of fans who buy *Preacher* every month.



9) FAIRCHILD

She's stronger than Ajax, more powerful than a Buick, able to knock out big gorillas with a single punch (see *Gen*[13] #15)...and now she's pissed. In this shot, Caitlin Fairchild is lookin' like one girlie you don't want to push around. Personally speaking, we're a little intimidated by women who can beat us up, so we're inclined to think that maybe she really has no reason to look so angry. We think she's just furthering the stereotype of the feisty redhead. That saucy little devil-girl!



10) SAVAGE DRAGON

Meet the Timex watch of superheroes: The Dragon takes a licking and keeps on ticking. He gets his ass kicked more than anyone this side of Paste-Pot Pete. He's had both arms ripped off, had a hole blown in his guts the size of a beach ball, and was even kicked off the Image softball team 'cause he couldn't wear a cap, thanks to that damn fin on his head. Good thing he's got a dedicated fan following, 'cause the rest of his life is pretty rough.

MORT OF THE MONTH

Now it's time to look at the lamest character of the month, or, as we like to call 'em, the Mort of the Month!

RUBY THURSDAY

Is that the cover girl from *Comic Babes with Bowling Ball Heads Monthly?* No, it's even worse. It's Ruby Thursday.

Ruby, y'see, was this super-smart scientist chick bent on world domination. So like any self-respecting quack who wanted to rule the Earth, she decided to cut her own head off (don't ask us how) and replace it with an "organic computer." Then she joined the Headmen, a supervillain group that also included a monkey-man, a guy with no bones and a sideshow magician called "Chondu the Mystic." Why? Well, as near as we can tell, when she lopped her head off, SHE DIDN'T BOTHER TO SAVE HER BRAIN! Guess that explains a lot.

BULL PEN

Served Luke-warm

A crack strike team selected from the mighty Wizard staff gathered beneath a setting sun in the Wizard Press parking lot. There, the fearless warriors piled into ill-smelling cars, determined to crush Jim Starlin, Ron Marz, Bernie Wrightson, Todd Dezago, Fred Hembeck, Terry Austin, Alex Bialy and the rest of their commandos for daring to challenge the power of Wizard. Oh, yes, we would destroy them…in volleyball.

In reality, they kicked our asses so hard we were crappin' boots for a week. How'd it all go down? "I was talking to Todd and Ron, and they mentioned they play volleyball each week," said Team Leader Matthew Senreich. "I said, 'Please—you're too old for volleyball.' " Or so we thought. Though hope temporarily bloomed when we won one of the games, we were slapped around with one win and two losses, the worst loss clocking in at 15-4. The pseudoathletic Jim McLauchlin claimed, "We would've won except for the fact that our guts were still churning and our minds still reeling over Starlin's mooning us before the games."

The last laugh? We'll just make sure none of 'em ever makes our top 10 hottest writers and artists lists.

From left to right, top row: *Wizard* staffers Mike Marts, Jim McLauchlin, Steve Blackwell, Mike Searle; bottom row: Darren Sanchez, Brian Cunningham, Matthew Senreich

One of the Damned

Bob Marshall

price guide editor, *Wizard: The Guide to Comics*

What is it you do at *Wizard*?
I input all the price changes and new text into the price guides for *Wizard*, *InQuest* and *ToyFare*, and help keep tabs on the comic book retailers and the market. I also spread my own little shadow of gloom around the office when people get too happy.

Your favorite sections in *Wizard*?
"Toy Chest" (I love seeing what's coming out in the toy world) and "Magic Words" (some of the letters and Jim's responses crack me up).

What surprised you the most about the Wizard offices?
The fact that right next door lives a proudly endowed basset hound named Sedgewick.

What's the scariest thing about you?
My uncanny ability to silently appear behind people and scare them out of their wits.

And the friendliest thing?
I love animals, and small children—'cause they taste good.

Favorite movies of all time?
"The Fearless Vampire Killers," "Godzilla, King of the Monsters" and "Edward Scissorhands."

Who would play you in a movie?
I don't really care, as long as Winona Ryder plays the female lead.

Favorite TV shows?
"The X-Files," "Mystery Science Theater 3000" and, of course, original "Star Trek."

Favorite albums?
Within the Realm of a Dying Sun by Dead Can Dance and *Teignmouth* by Love is Colder than Death.

People would be surprised to know that you…
…once played Snoopy in a grammar-school production of "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown."

Favorite comics right now?
I'm starting to really like Amaze Ink's *Skeleton Key* and Caliber's *The Lost*.

What superpower would you want, and why?
To project beams of light out of my eyes, like searchlights. It would be handy in utter darkness, and really freak people out.

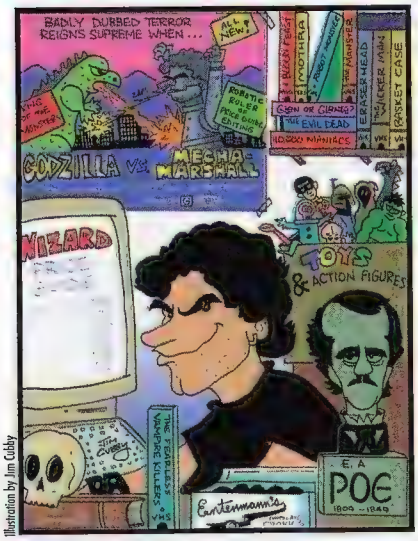


Illustration by Jim Cubby

WIZARD TOP TEN

Top 10 things to avoid during this summer's comic book convention season

10. That wild-eyed geek in the corner, giggling madly to himself that he got a good deal on *Harbinger* #1.
9. Anyone who has legally changed their name to "Jean-Luc."
8. The 50%-off mega-blowout sale of slightly fire-damaged issues of *Barbie Fashion*!
7. Dealers selling livestock.
6. Any dealer table where the customers are all standing with their pants around their ankles.
5. Dealer with a sign that reads, "Will trade back issues of *X-Men* for your sister."
4. The Vampirella model with the funny-looking sores around her mouth.
3. Verotik Comics' "Nude Crisco Twister" party with Glenn Danzig.
2. That really cute guy dressed up as Rogue.
1. Former Marvel employees begging for spare change.

CONTEST WINNERS

STARMAN, *Wizard* #67: Robert Hack, Huntingdon, Pa.
TYRANT, #67: Casey Zebrowski, Bloomingdale, Ga.
X-MEN TATTOOS, #67: Jerry Fill, Bethlehem, Pa.
Check out Jerry's amazing tattoo below!

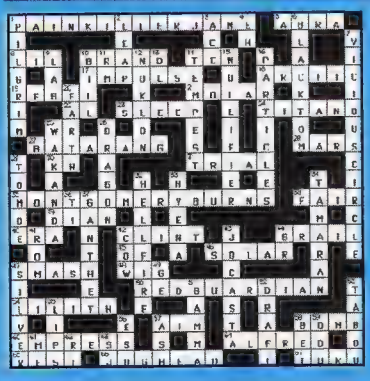
from page 202

C.B.I.Q. answers…

1. B	5. D	9. A	13. B	17. C
2. D	6. C	10. D	14. C	18. D
3. A	7. B	11. B	15. C	19. B
4. B	8. A	12. C	16. C	20. C

from page 203

CROSSWORD answers…



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WIZARD profile

Here's looking at...

TONY HARRIS

Tony Harris: Man of Mystery. "I was born in the Southeastern U.S.," he reveals. "That's all I'm going to tell you. Where was I raised? All over."

What is no mystery, however, is that after years of putting his fingerprints on just about every book on the planet, Harris has finally found security in his third year on DC's *Starman*. "When you jump around as a freelancer, it's easy to have your attention span dwindle down to that of a gnat," says the 28-year-old Macon, Ga., resident. "When I got *Starman*, I had to buckle down and just get serious about the work."

Harris, who describes his pencil prowess as "Deco Gothic Noir with a slant toward realism," spent his childhood "getting into trouble, not making friends and getting into art." A *Star Wars* comic struck his fancy at age 12, but it would be six years, a high school diploma and not much luck in the commercial-art world before Harris even saw the light in the guise of a Jim Lee Punisher book. "I never thought of art as a way to make a living until I read *Punisher: War Journal*. Then I thought, 'Wow! I can do this *and* turn a buck!' "

Harris' first paying job came with the first two issues of Innovation's *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. That was soon followed by issues #1-#3 of a *Doc Savage* series for Millennium, covers for Malibu's *Re-Animator* #1-#3, DC's *Legion of Super-Heroes* (vol. 4) #27 and Marvel's *Nightbreed* #17-#19.

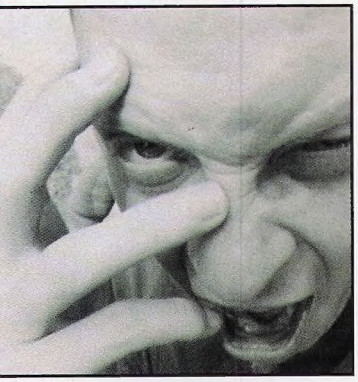

Photo courtesy of Tony Harris

"After that, it's just too many things to mention," says Harris of a period that included brief stops at *The Incredible Hulk*, X-Men and Spawn books, Star Wars and DC Villains card sets, "and all kinds of covers, pin-ups and illustrations." And, in between, Harris admits there were some dry spells.

"The independents, at that time, were notoriously slow to pay, so I would do T-shirts and ads to pay the rent and just continue to hone my art so that when the jobs came along, I would be ready."

Consequently, Harris was at the top of his game when writer James Robinson came calling with the offer to help him get *Starman* off the ground. Three years later, Harris finds himself happily booked up on *Starman* until the title's projected last hurrah in January 2000. And he's certainly enjoyed his stay so far.

"I like being on the ground floor of something and having total control in terms of design," he says. "On *Starman*, I don't feel like I'm just another man on the totem pole."

In his spare time, Harris has also gone the creator-owned route with a four-issue mini-series called *The Hour of Reckoning* for Event Comics, featuring werewolves, witches and magic. It seems the world of Tony Harris is work, serious work. Just don't tell *him* that.

"I'm still screwing around," he chuckles. "Only now I'm getting paid to do it."

By Marc Shapiro

First comic read...

The "Star Wars" adaptation. Al Williamson's art has always been amazing to me.

Favorite character of all time...

Hourman. I liked the idea of a regular Joe whose power did not come from on high.

Favorite work of your own...

Starman. A lot of times, an editor will give you freedom and ultimately not like your work. On *Starman*, I was given freedom and they liked my work.

Superpower you would most want...

Speed, which I think every comic book artist would like to have.

Comic you currently read...

Hellboy. The sense of storytelling and design is absolutely amazing.

Favorite munchie at 2 a.m....

Garlic bagel chips and cream cheese

Favorite toy as a kid and as an adult...

As a kid, my Evel Knievel motorcycle. As an adult, my guns.

Things you collect...

Handguns and inkwells

Person you would most want to meet...

Turn-of-the-century illustrator Howard Pyle. His work has had such a profound effect on my work.

Person who would play you in a movie about yourself...

Dermot Mulroney ("My Best Friend's Wedding")

Favorite cartoon...

"Aeon Flux." I love the high drama and high action.

Person you would most like to work with...

Artist Kevin Nowlan. He knows exactly how to do things.

Favorite TV show...

"Millennium." Lance Henriksen. Lance Henriksen. And Chris Carter can do no wrong.

Last good movie you saw...

"Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes." The best telling of that story I've seen in my life.

Last good book you read...

The Lost World, by Michael Crichton. I enjoyed *Jurassic Park* so much, I couldn't wait to find out what happened.

If you had the power of The Beyonder...

I'd be able to draw 12 pages a day.

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